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The Flight of Donald Woods

A few weeks ago in South Africa, Alan Paton declared that the policies of the Nationalist Party were leading to war, and that he personally felt no moral responsibility to stay and watch his country being destroyed. From the man who educated a generation with his *Cry, the Beloved Country*, this latest despairing statement has very sober overtones for white dissent. Unlike liberals and radicals in most parts of the world, the embattled circle of the enlightened in South Africa do not want to see their Cassandra-like prophecies come true. This is for two reasons; the first being the unique and ambiguous love that white South Africans and Rhodesians have for their native heath. The second reason is more compelling still. If the racial polarisation that they have for so long predicted should come about, they have no chance at all of gaining from it. The white backlash will crush them on the one hand, and the subsequent African revolutionary tide will have very little use for, or even patience with the stoutest white anti-racist.

It is this dilemma which has slowly emptied South Africa of its civilised white critics and activists. Bishop Ambrose Reeves, Canon Gonville Ffrench-Beytagh, Bishop Colin Winter and many others have been bullied or cajoled into leaving the country, many repenting afterwards what seemed imperative at the time. Now Donald Woods, an editor and publicist in the heroic tradition, has been separated from his constituency, too, and apart from the fact that it makes their police look stupid (a superfluous necessity) there is no reason to think that the bosses of apartheid regret his flight.

It symbolises, moreover, a personal and political defeat. The brave liberals of South Africa have until recently been trying to persuade the black majority that the press is not quite deaf to their misery, that the courts are not closed to their complaints, and that the vestigial democracy of the system can yet be turned to account. Indeed, it was precisely for this purpose that Donald Woods bravely used his newspaper, the East London *Daily Dispatch*, winning a large black readership in the process. What he was trying to do – and what before his banning order on 19 October he to some extent achieved – was to throw a bridge across the racial divide. Yet it is generalising only slightly to say that the Biko verdict has consigned all such hopes to the dustbin of history. Donald Woods was the only white man really and publicly trusted by the black emergent leadership; now that this leadership is dead or scattered (for the moment), his own departure is a cruel blow.

There can be no breath of criticism for Woods's own courage. When a man finds that plain-clothes policemen are posting acid-soaked shirts to his small daughter, and going unpunished, any defensive measures he takes are *ipso facto* justified. But the life and opinions of an exile inevitably become less relevant with the passage of time, and the memory of his stand will fade as the South African press becomes more docile and slavish. Even the titanic voice of Solzhenitsyn has been partially stilled by his absence from his country – it seems over-optimistic to hope that Woods can succeed where so many have failed.

Even so, the episode of Biko's death and Woods's campaign will have its place in the history books. If the South African authorities had dumped the atrocious Jimmy Kruger instead of applauding him; if they had made a firm purpose of amendment through a court of inquiry instead of turning the inquest into a farce, there might have been a chance. But as it is, the Vorster regime has decided to dig a trench of blood between itself and the civilised world as well as between itself and its African serfs. In a broadcast last Sunday Donald Woods said that he knew every member of the South African cabinet, and that not one of them was a monster. That is a measure of how terrible the system is that can run its monstrous course without the necessity for individual sadism or lunacy. Scholars differ about how long this appalling tyranny can endure, but there is now a young movement determined that the lifetime of this generation will see an end to it. The burden of opposition has now passed directly to them.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

What About Cambodia?

A cabinet minister recently asked me what Labour should say about Cambodia. He thought it wrong that all discussion of the matter should be left to the Tories. He thought it about time that a Labour politician actually *said* something about it, but what he could not see was – what on earth there was to say. One might wring one's hands. One might express a general horror. But beyond that, what? In the last week, reports from the East have raised the possibility of a renewed Indochina War. The Cambodians speak of a Vietnamese invasion of their country. The Vietnamese speak of thousands of Vietnamese casualties. Each side accuses the other of the most unspeakable atrocities, and there are reports of large-scale troop movements and clashes. One might have thought that the respective countries would by now have lost the taste for war. Alas, not so.

On the Vietnamese side there is a terrible possibility of action. They could perfectly well, if angered enough, decide to teach the Cambodians a lesson they will never forget. They could confiscate territory and redraw the border unilaterally. They could take on the whole Cambodian army with no trouble at all, for they possess all the means of doing so. The Cambodians are not guerrilla fighters. They prefer pitched battles on the heroic scale. If their victories are colossal, so too are their defeats. If they give no quarter, they do not expect to receive any either. In these circumstances, it is quite possible that they would march out, ill-equipped as they are, against the Vietnamese. And thus the fierce religion of warfare would engage with military science at its most modern, most competent and most cruel.

What makes them do it? Is the nation mad? Has the Cambodian race finally proved itself incapable of survival, in some savage, supra-Darwinian sense? Certainly the whole culture seemed to go into a tail-spin at the end of the war. Today it resembles not *1984* but *Lord of the Flies*. What is the average age in Cambodia? Twenty? Thirty? And what is the average age in the army? The last battle for Phnom Penh was something of a children's crusade. If the old have since been killed off by hunger, disease and strain, and if the defeated army was largely massacred, and if the bourgoisie was wiped out or allowed to flee we are indeed left with a country run by children.

Children have a narrow understanding, but they make up for this with a powerful capacity for belief. The Cambodian children trained by the Lon Nol regime were among the best fighters in the army. They believed in the authority of their officers. They believed in their own strength. If they were told, 'Go and occupy that position,' they would go and do so. They had the bravery of ignorance. How much more so, on the Khmer Rouge side, must the boy soldiers have felt that their bravery would win them whatever they wanted. They were the sacrificial elite of the society. Everything was organised around their impending deaths.

And the ideology of the society had to be such as an unschooled child could grasp. If the young warrior could neither read nor write, why, that was because reading and writing were unrevolutionary. If the Lon Nol regime held all the major cities, that was because cities were wicked. If there was little decent housing, that was because people who lived in large houses exploited the poor. The North Vietnamese told their soldiers that the people of Saigon lived in poverty and misery. The Khmers Rouges told their soldiers the truth – that there was wealth in the cities. Wealth was evil.

Of course wealth was evil. Wealth had provided the bombs. Wealth provided the napalm. Wealth bought the bullets. The Khmers Rouges were not a haphazard movement formed by the voluntary association of extremely nasty people. The cruelty they meted out was nothing to what they themselves had suffered in the early stages of the war. Nor were the forms of cruelty haphazard. The practice of beating people to death made sound sense in an economy where bullets were scarce, and it unfortunately happens to be true that, if you get in the habit of beating people to death, you will find in the end that you like it. Your own children, my dear reader, would turn out just the same, under the same conditions: just look at them – you wouldn't give them guns for Christmas, so they kill each other with imaginary guns.

The Khmers Rouges were never well known until they won the war. It was then, with the evacuation of Phnom Penh and all its attendant miseries, that they caught the public imagination, and that Cambodia – a hitherto obscure country – became a very symbol of horror. But what is it *really* a symbol of? If you consider merely the events since the fall of the capital, it may indeed be perfectly serviceable as a watchword for the crassest forms of anti-communism: remember Cambodia – there were these communists – they took over – look what happened. As long as you ignore what went before, you may find this argumentative style attractive.

But if you take the whole history of the war, Cambodia becomes a symbol of something else. The word stands for the way the possibility of a good society can be destroyed. It was an American who coined the expression, 'bomb them into the Stone Age'. It was America that set the process going in Cambodia. We are used to the idea of the division of countries: Korea, Vietnam, Berlin, Jerusalem, all have been eloquent symbols of division. But even now, even so long after, the Greek Cypriot cannot get used to the idea of the division of *his* country. How much more difficult to grasp is the idea that a whole society may be wiped out, a whole culture eliminated, and a whole history terminated in idiotic misery.

With the triumph of the Khmers Rouges, Cambodia was caught in the grip of a nightmare, and it is difficult to see how the nightmare is going to end. For the clue to Cambodian politics and character, and the clue to the events of the last few days, is the nightmare within the nightmare – this fear of total extinction. Look at Cambodia on a map – see how little coastline it has, and how eerily Thailand has eaten away at its share. Look at the Mekong delta, look as far as Saigon – all that was Cambodia once. It is really not incredible to a Cambodian that the Vietnamese should decide to initiate a final solution.

Nor is it odd that Cambodian isolationism has gone so far. In an ideal world, the Cambodians would be grateful even to dispense with the aid of China. The fear of extinction, the experience of Chinese domination of the cities, the experience of the Vietnamese, the experience at the hands of the French and the Americans – all this has imbued the Cambodian character with a feeling of deep racial inferiority. So, say the Khmers Rouges, we are stupid are we? stupid perhaps, but strong; stupid, but self-sufficient; stupid, but feared.

Suppose then that the patience of Vietnam is exhausted, and the invasion turns into a real war, deep in Cambodian territory. What will the Thais think about that? Will they just sit by, and let it happen? Or will they decide that the time has come for *their* final solution too? However these notions are viewed by the outside world, we may be certain that in Cambodia they are ever-present, and that Khieu Samphan's comparison between the Vietnamese and Hitler was no accident. Cambodians have often talked about their country comparing it to Israel, and indeed I once heard an Israeli diplomat compare Israel with Cambodia. In Cambodia's case, it is the fear of extinction which makes the extinction itself more likely, which will shape any society the Khmers Rouges build, and which will determine the best of their options for the future – permanent militarism, slavery and gloom.

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Alexander Cockburn

Is Carter Accident-Prone?

We should get one thing straight: President Carter is not maladroit in the manner of his two immediate predecessors. Nixon, tricky as a snake in most respects, was so physically clumsy that he could not get the top off a bottle of aspirin without gnawing at it. Ford simply fell down a few times before finishing himself off in the campaign debates by stoutly insisting that Poland was a free country under no form of foreign domination.

Carter, on the other hand, probably has no problem with aspirin bottles (no easy task under present FDA regulations) and has not so far fallen down within range of a camera. And it would be a little unfair to blame him for the delicious lapses which have disfigured what started as a simple electioneering spree on behalf of Giscard d'Estaing (and in the modern manner, if you are going to Paris, why not travel via New Delhi?).

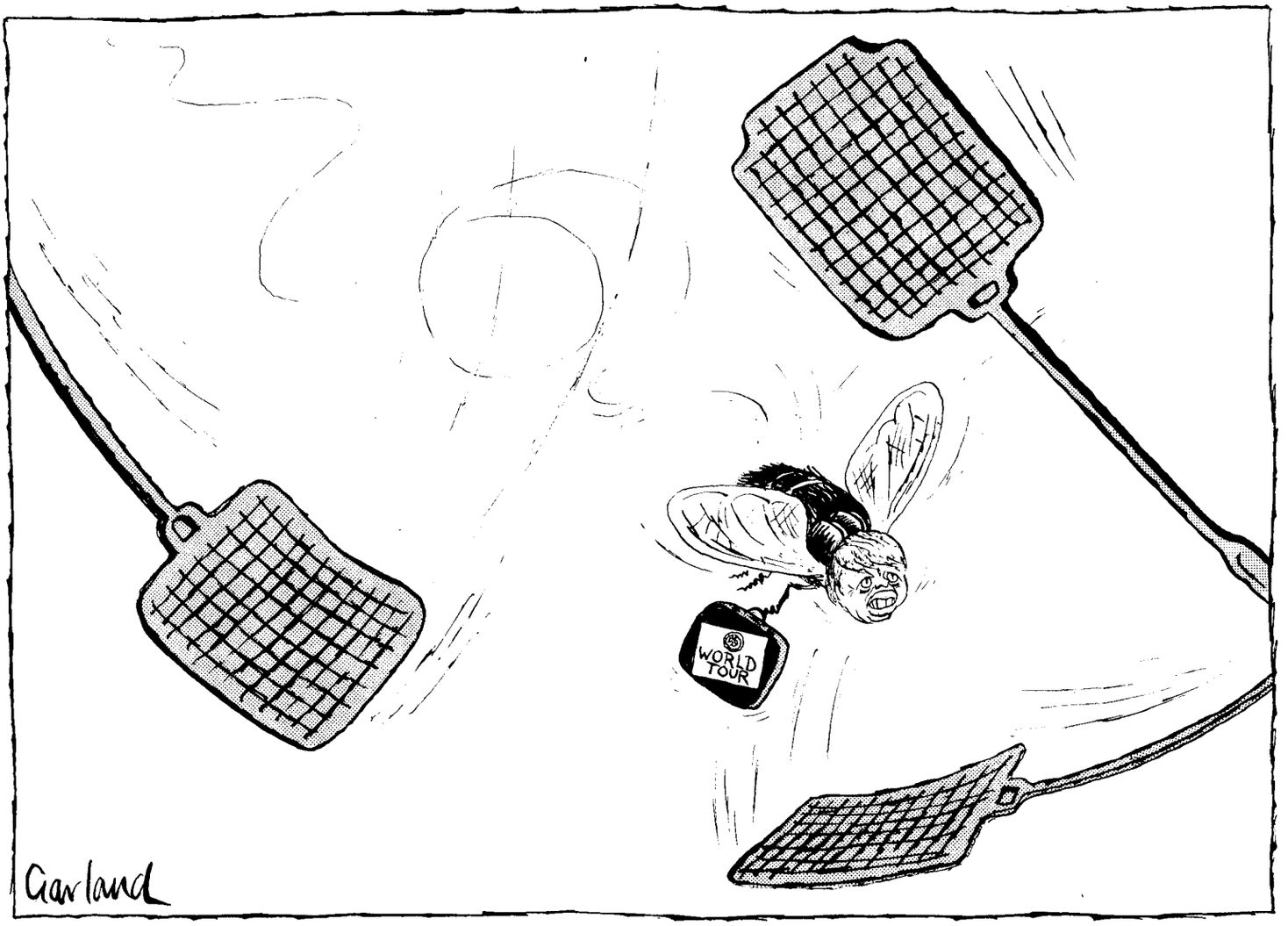
It was bad luck on him to be on the receiving end of the ultimate Polish joke. It is hard to retain dignity when your translator announces to the Polish people that the President of the United States has 'abandoned' his country. Nixon and Kissinger were much more cautious on this matter of interpreting. In their justified paranoia about news leaks they sensibly used official Russian and Chinese interpreters on all important occasions and told State Department linguists to stay at home. Carter's unfortunate interpreter, Mr Steven Seymour, had previously officiated at trade talks in Washington, which may explain the world-wide uproar over protectionism and tariffs.

Nor should the unfortunate embarrassment of his private remarks to Cyrus Vance in New Delhi being recorded on NBC microphones be taken as evidence of unlucky susceptibility to accidents. American politicians live so constantly in front of microphones that they understandably begin to regard them as harmless pieces of furniture. Both Rockefeller, chattering about a black envoy passing across his field of vision in Congress, and Kissinger, gossiping about Nixon across a Canadian dinner table, have in recent times realised too late their mistake.

The interest with Carter is that he does not exactly make verbal lapses but suddenly shovels out phrases or sentences or even whole paragraphs which either disclose an outlook entirely discordant with the one he commonly contrives, or which – because of their evident distance from reality – persuade one that he regards the English language purely as a campaigning tool, only coincidentally connected with truth. And the latter, more reprehensible habit is causing him significant political damage, and can be taken as an index of his fortunes in his first year.

I was reminded of the first habit by Mr Seymour's rendering of Carter's reference at Warsaw airport to the Polish people's 'desires for the future' as their 'lusts for the future'. (Some Polish experts tell me that the more correct retranslation from Seymour's Polish would have been 'orgasms for the future'.) Either way this recalls – as it may have indeed in poor Seymour's unconscious – Carter's famous announcement in the *Playboy* interview conducted during his campaign that he looked on women with lust in his heart. It's not that this was a dreadful thing to say, but that it ran athwart Carter's previous presentation of himself and therefore caused a bit of a commotion.

Such surprising forthrightness sometimes melts into something a little less disarming. To take a couple of examples: on the campaign trail Carter made his notorious reference to the 'ethnic purity' of neighbourhoods. Last year, in the heat of



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the criticism over his desire to deny federal Medicaid funds for abortions, he announced, through the halo of 'compassion' previously surrounding his head, that 'life is unfair' – in this case to poor women as opposed to rich ones. Both phrases, one of them a reminiscence of something Kennedy once said, still stick in the mind of a good many people as evidence of an often unpalatable phrase-maker for all seasons.

The phrase-making is gradually getting the President into more and more trouble. He spent much time once saying that the tax code of the United States was a disgrace. He said this many times last year and since everyone healthily agreed with the view they were cheered by the prospect of reform. No change is now in view. In another famous phrase he said, last year, that his energy plan was 'the moral equivalent of war'. Everyone liked this, too, since it seemed excitingly indicative of firm resolve. The energy plan, now basically a shot in the arm for the oil companies, is stalled in Congress and the US is importing more oil than ever from the Middle East. 'Bert, I'm proud of you,' announced the President after glancing at a report devastating to the financial reputation of Bert Lance. A few weeks later he was accepting Lance's resignation. Not so long after this the President was standing on the White House lawn and, as the spokesman for human rights, was wiping the tear gas from his eyes he praised the Shah's 'progressive rule' which, he said, 'has roused the admiration of the world'. So far as domestic human rights are concerned, the President's phrases about unemployment, the plight of the cities, the need for a national health plan and so forth are getting harder and harder to recall in their specifics. But people do recall that he promised unflinching, immediate action; and people do now observe that no such action is now underway.

There is a point beyond which it is absurd to go in criticising the President's failure and self-contradictions – and indeed those of his administration. To have a president talk about human rights at all is something. To attempt an energy plan – however misconceived – is not in itself a disgrace. Indeed, to have had him mention the need for a Palestinian homeland early last year was an advance, even though in a typical piece of somewhat unnecessary phrase-making he has given Sadat heart failure on this subject in recent days. To have a president denounce nuclear proliferation and indeed recommend to Vance over the tell-tale microphone that Morarji Desai be reproached on this score is better than nothing, even if the famous energy plan envisages the constructions of hundreds of light-water reactors in the US. To have a President cancel the B-1 bomber is better than having one promoting this instrument as well as the Cruise missile. To have a president fire Arthur Burns as chairman of the Federal Reserve is fine, even if the corporate chieftain drafted for the job will probably not be much better.

But there is a point also where such justifications stutter to a halt. Precisely at the heart of Carter's most energetic phrase-making before he assumed the Presidency was the need to attack unemployment, to overturn eight years of Republican callousness to the poor and to the cities. And it is precisely in this area, amid attempts to build business 'confidence' (which have only aroused the contempt of the business community), the stated resolve to avoid price and wage controls, above all – futilely – to balance the budget, that the Administration has done nothing to amend Carter's placid, undistressed confession that life is indeed unfair. In this context the most famous phrase of all, 'Trust me', is sounding, in millions of ears, more and more hollow as the months pass.

New York

Patrick Seale

The Politics of Oil

Just before Christmas, at a heavily-guarded Caribbean resort some 25 miles from Caracas, occurred a non-event of enormous significance: 13 powerful men flew in from across the world, talked things over for a couple of days, reached no agreement, and flew home again.

In a nearby hotel, some 300 journalists consumed a small lake of rum-and-coke and reported that the fiftieth conference of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries had (as the ineffable prose of the final communiqué put it) failed 'to reach a common consensus' on 'the question of a price readjustment'. In other words, the price of crude oil – the world's most important source of energy – is to be frozen at its present level for at least six months and possibly for the rest of the decade. There was jubilation at the outcome in industrialised countries and much gnashing of teeth elsewhere.

Since oil underpins so much of the world's economy, decisions about its price and availability tend to illumine the ebb and flow of power on the international scene. What can be said about the Venezuela meeting is that Opec, for so long the vaunted instrument of Third World liberation and the scourge of the developed nations, has now been tamed. Its teeth have been drawn with ruthless skill by the United States. Of course this is not a diplomatic way of putting it. Some would prefer to say that Opec has come of age, that it is displaying a new maturity, that its members are consenting to sacrifices because of their concern for the slow growth, soaring unemployment and shaky monetary system of the capitalist world.

But whatever gloss is put on the decision to freeze prices, it seems evident that Opec, or rather its two or three most powerful members, have come to adopt the priorities of the rich rather than hearken to the cries of the needy. This change of climate bodes ill for Third World activists. The message from Caracas is that once the industrialised West recovers from its present malaise it will be time enough to deal with the crippling debts and vanishing purchasing power of the have-nots of the globe. First things first. Although untrumpeted and low-key, this is a turning point as dramatic as Opec's unilateral oil price increase in 1970 or the quantum leap in prices with which the cartel showed its muscle after the 1973 October War.

The oil fields around the shores of the Persian Gulf constitute the most important single deposit of strategic raw materials in the world. Conceivably, they are one of the few pieces of real estate the West might use nuclear weapons to defend. Not surprisingly, the United States has in recent years exerted great efforts to bind to itself Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two oil giants of the region which together control 48 per cent of Opec output. The security of these states is a prime objective of American foreign policy. It is largely to protect the oil from the dangers of a regional conflict or a Soviet smash and grab raid that America has so patiently been prodding, pushing and coaxing Arabs and Israelis towards peace.

It has also showered Saudi Arabia and Iran with advanced weaponry (a current jibe is that Washington has promised the Shah he can spend his last oil dollar on American arms); helped them shape their huge development plans; transferred technology to them on an unprecedented scale not only by exporting plants and processes but also tens of thousands of American citizens to show them how to work them; and, through billion-dollar investments flowing from these countries to the United States, it has tied them to the health of the dollar and to that of the American economy.

Saudi Arabia and Iran are both friends and adversaries: the first sees itself as the wise mentor of the squabbling Arab family, while the second aspires, more ambitiously, to be the regional gendarme, cracking down on radicals whenever and wherever they raise their head, on *either* side of the Gulf. The United States has managed to conciliate these overlapping ambitions by bringing both Riyadh and Tehran under the umbrella of its global security system.

These policies paid off in Caracas. Using both stick and carrot, Washington persuaded

NEXT WEEK

Selected American Books

A. J. P. Taylor on the Cold War
Martin Amis on Philip Roth
Eric Ambler: 'The Scientific American'
Other reviews by
Richard Ellmann, Malcolm Bradbury
and George MacDonald Fraser.

Also

Christopher Hitchens: Two Dictatorships
A Report from Chile and the Argentine.

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the two oil giants that the industrial world needed a breather from higher oil prices. Saudi Arabia, which already earns far more money than it can put to good use, took the point more quickly than Iran. It was only after a stiff talking to by Jimmy Carter in Washington last November (and psychologically weakened, perhaps, by the hostile demos against him) that the Shah was converted to the cause of oil price stability. 'After perusing the world economic situation,' he declared, 'we have come to the conclusion to give you a break.' Faced then in Caracas with the unbeatable alliance of Saudi Arabia and Iran, to which the United Arab Emirates and Qatar also rallied, price 'hawks' such as Iraq and Libya could do no more than register impotent dissent, mutter foul oaths and slink home to fight another day. For the moment at least, the de facto, open-ended price freeze is on.

The dollar, under severe attack this year, has earned a respite and is likely to regain some lost ground Carter has demonstrated to his Congressional critics that he has enough clout with the oil producers to stem the haemorrhage of America's oil import bill, now running at a staggering $45,000m. Having won the oil price battle, his energy programme will look more credible.

But what of the cost? The diktat on prices caused some red faces in Caracas including that of the conference host, President Carlos Andrés Pérez of Venezuela, who had battled valiantly for a 'modest' increase of 5 to 8 per cent, on the plea that the increment should be handed over to oil-poor developing countries to help them service their debts. He took a beating, as did the Third World philosophy he stands for. A long fuse of resentment has been lit.

The latest humiliation must be seen against the background of the abortive North-South dialogue which petered out in Paris last June and the failure of last month's UNCTAD conference in Geneva on a common fund for stabilising commodity prices. Hardliners in the United States and its principal allies, West Germany, Britain and Japan, tend to dismiss as so much hogwash Third World aspirations for a bigger say in world economic decision-making. They scoff at the so-called New International Economic Order which Algeria, Venezuela and so many other Asian, African and Latin American countries have made an article of faith. Now that the richest oil producers have, so to speak, crossed the road from the shanty-town to the Sheraton, Third World rhetoric seems thin indeed. But it is as well to remember that the poverty of the many remains a constant danger to the prosperity of the few.

Another idea which took a beating at Caracas is that of the urgent need to stimulate investment in nuclear power and other alternative energy sources before – in less than a decade – oil becomes too scarce and too expensive to burn up in the profligate way we do now. But the only effective means to reduce oil consumption and stimulate the development of alternatives is by raising oil prices *now*. Whatever the short-term current oil market glut, freezing prices and allowing the real price of oil to fall in comparison with the cost of industrial goods, is therefore both blind and pig-headed.

A Special Correspondent

Stirrings in a Persian Garden

After more than 14 years of enforced political silence, the last few months in Iran have seen the emergence of an opposition movement, whose widespread, varied support has surprised and worried the Government. Its roots go back a quarter of a century, to those brief years of Dr Mossadeq's government from 1951 to 1953, a period of popular participation in a liberal democratic coalition (the Jebheh-i Melli) sandwiched between two 25-year spans of Pahlavi rule. After the CIA-supported coup that brought down this coalition, every attempt was made in the subsequent years to prevent its re-formation as well as to suppress the banned Tudeh party whose relations with the Mossadeq government were at worst hostile, at best ambivalent. The serious disturbances of 1962-63 showed that this had only been partially successful, and the memory of Dr Mossadeq and the relative political freedom of that period has ever since exercised a powerful emotive influence on those old enough to recall that attempt at constitutional and democratic government.

For the young, however, an alternative to the suffocation of political life lay in the guerrilla movement, effectively begun with the Siahkal incident of 1971. Despite its exiguous resources in the face of the government's might, the courage and tenacity of these activists has at least exposed the myth of SAVAK's invincibility and omnipresence. In that sense, the lesson derived from their activities has been positive: despite all odds, despite the terrors of SAVAK prisons, repressive censorship and the elaborate propaganda machinery at the Government's command, opposition cannot be totally eliminated; in different international or internal circumstances, that coalition of political groups which have still sustained the deepest allegiances of many, might still be revived.

Earlier this year, there was a perceptible change in the political atmosphere; the Government ostensibly allowed an 'open' political trial in April, representatives from the International Red Cross were invited to visit SAVAK prisons, physical torture (it was claimed) had stopped, and many political prisoners were released. Seizing their opportunity, former opposition leaders like Bazargan, Foruhar, Bakhtiar and Sanjabi, as well as influential professional groups such as lawyers, judges and writers, circulated outspoken attacks on the accumulation of total power by the Government. The decision to ignore these encouraged more, and Tehran, for so long empty of any genuine political activity, was now bristling with political excitement and anticipation – even though little of this was reflected in the government-controlled press.

What made these manifestations and letters so effective were the strictly legal and constitutional arguments that were used. Their central accusation was that the division of power between the executive, legislative and judicial authorities, a principle at the heart of the constitution of 1906, had been consistently violated by the executive in recent years. Likewise the judges and lawyers criticised the creation of special tribunals and more recent legislation that undermined the independence and authority of the judiciary. Open letters from the Writers' Association, the second signed by 98 leading intellectuals and writers, insisted on the basic freedoms of association, of the written word and of speech, guaranteed in the constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but denied in practice by the Government. All these have lain unanswered, and indeed, in terms of constitutional propriety, are unanswerable.

Instead the Government seemed content to ignore their demands and see what the Washington talks, scheduled for mid-November, might bring. These were seen by both sides as crucial, a chance for the regime to vindicate its 'improved' human rights image at the White House, and for the opposition, a test of what substance there might be behind the promises of Carter's much-vaunted support for human rights. As excitement quickened in Tehran, the Writers' Association organised evenings of 'poetry readings' from 10 to 19 October in the Iran-German Club's summer garden. Whereas their manifestos had passed from hand to hand in limited circles, this was the first public demonstration of the measure of their support. As many as 5 or 6,000 on successive nights heard poets and writers read their recent work or speak about the role of culture in society, 'freedom', the constitution, the effects of censorship or even their own experiences at the hands of SAVAK. Though lorry-loads of riot police lined Pahlavi avenue beyond the garden walls within ear-shot of the loud-

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speakers, the Association controlled their large audience in an exemplary way, constantly re-iterating the need for moderation so that SAVAK would not be given a pretext to disrupt the meetings. It was a public demonstration of the support they enjoyed. In the short term, the immediate impact was to heighten expectations for the Shah's Washington visit, and stiffen resistance in the universities against SAVAK's attempts to close the student libraries.

It was here on the university campuses, disturbed since the autumn by strikes and confrontations between students and SAVAK, that violence erupted on a larger scale. On the eve of the Washington talks, the students at Aryamehr University planned to stage five more evenings of speeches and readings spread over five weeks, and on Tuesday, 15 November, when it was the turn of Sa'id Sultanpour, a well-known producer in the theatre and a poet, released from prison within the last three months, the trouble began. Intervention of the university police, SAVAK provocateurs, reaction to the Washington demonstrations and the apparent accord established there, the sheer momentum of events as several outside the packed hall were arrested, led to an all-night sit-in, a further day of disturbances and more arrests.

Deliberate Escalation

After the release of some students, the rest decided on a peaceful march down Eisenhower Avenue to the Square and Tehran University before dispersing. When the orderly, silent procession, flanked by visored, riot police, was suddenly charged by the police, it marked a deliberate escalation of the violence by the authorities, who tried to use the rampage that followed, exacerbated by SAVAK infiltrators, to denigrate the student protests. The number of those arrested or wounded in this and subsequent attacks on the universities is not known, but several hundred are thought to have been temporarily arrested and many injured.

More important than these student demonstrations, commonplace in most Iranian universities during the last few years, though rarely on this scale involving several thousands, has been the gradual consolidation of an organised political movement, based on the different groups that had been at the core of the old Jebheh-i Melli. That a coalition of the different interests active throughout the summer should emerge was a logical step after the success of the Writers' Association's meetings, the Government's refusal to acknowledge their demands, as well as from the direct harassment of the lawyers and judges who had signed the petitions. On 3 November, a manifesto was distributed, signed by 56 signatories; they represent a broad cross-section of Jebheh-i Melli leaders, lawyers active in the earlier legal protests and prominent members of the Writers' Association, representing ideological positions ranging from Bazargan's 'Movement for Freedom', with its support among the more traditional and religiously-minded middle and smaller traders, others of Dr Mossadeq's supporters, socialists and left-wing groups. In measured, unequivocal phrases, they expose the constitutional illegalities of the present Government: the suppression of human rights, especially the basic freedoms of assembly, opinion and speech; the violation of the equilibrium of the three powers, and the people's right to govern their own future; the corruption and selfishness of the ruling elite, and the brutality of its methods of government; the denial of the constitution by setting up a single official party (Rastakhiz).

As the full list of their demands show, they believe the only way to avoid the political impasse is a return to constitutional government. A general amnesty for political prisoners, allowing political, religious and trade union associations, as well as freedom of the press and expression, the dissolution of both assemblies and local councils, free elections, safeguarding the independence of the judiciary and abandoning the special tribunals, abolishing those organisations that have infringed individual and social freedoms (i.e. SAVAK), and implementing UN protocol on human rights – all these are the measures, in their view, that would create a government capable of working for the general welfare of all society, not just the narrow sectional interests of the few.

The regime's response to this considered, cogently argued manifesto was the same violence earlier meted out to the students. On 22 November (the Muslim festival 'id-i ghorban, when Abraham showed his readiness to sacrifice Isaac), a meeting of about 1,000 was held at Karavansara Sangi (between Karaj and Tehran where in 1972 several textile workers, on strike, were machine-gunned down by the police). It was disrupted by about 12 busloads of 'patriotic workers' – SAVAK thugs armed with clubs and lengths of heavy cable. The number injured in this encounter is said to have been more than 300, many in positions of respect and importance in Iranian society. The subsequent arrest of Mahmud Etemadzadeh (Behazin), a prominent writer and translator at the centre of the Writers Association protests, together with a government warning in the Rastakhiz newspaper that disorders must cease, suggest a decision to crush the movement that had gathered momentum so alarmingly through the summer.

'We don't like jailing political offenders, but we are not an advanced country. We lack mental hospitals.'

It would be a serious miscalculation to imagine that brutality, intimidation or a simple government fiat could suppress a development of this intensity and breadth of support. Reports and recordings of the 'nights of poetry' have reached a far wider audience than the several thousand crowded into the Iran-German Club summer garden on those momentous evenings. University students, who since Siahkal in 1971 were faced with a stark choice between support for the guerrillas or passivity, have now had a powerful experience of a different kind of political activity. But its effects have reached beyond intellectual circles.

Opposition Strength

Some of the potentially most significant meetings have been those held in the bazaar, still the traditional heart of the business community and a focal point of religious activity. It is an arrogant misconception to assume that human and political rights would appeal only to an educated elite. Over 70 years ago the Persian constitution was won through the support of these wider levels of society; 25 years ago it was from these again that Dr Mossadeq drew his strength. The struggle for constitutional government against dictatorship has had a more general appeal. No one would believe that the political collapse of the Government was imminent – with so much physical and financial muscle at its command or so vital commercially and strategically to foreign interests. But the strength and widespread support of the opposition – for that is exactly what the fragmented, diverse dissident voices have become – has been tested. To a deep concern at the disrespect for the law, has been added a disgust at the brutality of the treatment given to those courageous enough to sign petitions or attend meetings. Why should Foruhar have 11 stitches in his head? Why were Homa Natiq or Ni'mat Mirzazadeh, respectively a scholar of distinction and a poet, taken away to a deserted area, abused and savagely beaten by SAVAK thugs? Why were Hezarkhani and Kazimieh, two other writers, similarly treated on Thursday 8 December in the small provincial town of Lahijan? Where are the limits to these repeated violations of the constitution? It is hardly surprising that there have been provincial disturbances, protest strikes by teachers in the capital, and that some secondary schools in Tehran and many of the universities are shut.

No doubt the Government can hold down these protests for the moment, but the question mark hanging over the succession has been re-emphasised. Despite the enormous propaganda and publicity of recent years and its undoubted successes in some fields, this movement has shown how deep lies the antipathy against the Government. Whether the new Prime Minister has the political acumen or the Government the credibility, let alone the will, to meet some of their demands is doubtful. What is certain is that the opposition has not been broken, and its determination to fight for the principles that inspired it in the last 25 years has been strengthened.

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Mary Holland

Intimations of Normality

1977 was the year that Ireland stopped being a fashionable international story. For nearly a decade the world's press has been pouring into Dublin en route for Belfast, heading for the pubs closest to the *Irish Times*, buying drinks all round and asking questions about the anti-imperialist struggle in the North, Burntollet, Bernadette at the barricades, Four green fields, Free Derry, Stone Mason shall not break us. Heady days of easy headlines. Two more hot whiskies and any chance of an intro to some of the hard lads in Belfast?

Last year the flow of foreign journalists and the hot whiskey dwindled almost to a trickle. Irish newspapers have rediscovered Ireland and run a lot of stories about how life has changed in the countryside during the five years of EEC membership. We all agree that this is entirely healthy. Ireland is a small developing country with little clout in the world pecking order and it is as well that we should once again become familiar with this fact. We should be preoccupied with the importance of getting Irish lamb into the French market and what effect this will have on our unemployment rate. And yet, if the truth be told, it's taking us a bit of time to get used to our lack of newsworthiness. The price of cattle on the hoof is no substitute for what Mr Eamonn de Valera used to call 'the national evolution'. Small wonder that our most exotic political intellectual has abandoned us for the *Observer*.

In Dublin now it is fashionable to say that 'the North has gone off the boil'. Roy Mason would doubtless put it rather differently, preferring to talk of the dramatic reduction in the statistics of violence, the increase in convictions, a triumph for the security forces, the common sense of the two communities and, last but not least, for old Stone Mason himself. It may be that he has broken the fighting capacity of the Provisional IRA. More likely, time and exhaustion have taken their inevitable toll. In Belfast just before Christmas I talked to a leading Provo, one of those whom British army officers, scrupulously eager to show their impartiality in this conflict, were wont to describe as 'a damn fine fighter'. This man's wife died last autumn; he has young children of whom he has seen little in recent years since most of his Christmases have been spent either interned or on the run. He now spends most of his spare time with them. It seems that the British officer in charge of the Catholic ghetto where he lives, seeing him in the street, came to offer sympathy on the death of his wife and then ventured the opinion that he 'seemed to have mellowed'. His reply was: 'I thanked him for his sympathy and told him to remember that it wasn't the British army that beat me. Nor would it ever be. It was circumstances that beat me.'

In the pre-Christmas rush in Belfast it was easy to appreciate just how overwhelming the yearnings have become for some kind of normal life, for the things people in most cities take for granted. Long queues of people waited at the security checks to get into the city centre and again at the entrances of shops to see Santa, to take the kids shopping, to sing carols. In the end such human needs after a decade of violence are irresistible.

This is a very long way from saying that Mr Mason has pacified Northern Ireland or that any solution other than sheer exhaustion is in sight. War weariness does not, alas, mean that people have changed or become more willing to compromise; it simply means they don't have the energy or the capacity to keep fighting. The danger is that, through expediency or optimism, this exhaustion will be taken as evidence of a new reasonableness which makes a political solution much easier. At the very least there will be the temptation to see the exhaustion itself as the solution, since at least it means a defeat for the extremists and a dramatic reduction in the violence.

The fighting will not stop entirely because as long as the British army is on the streets of Catholic ghettos to defeat the IRA it will drive the youth of those ghettos into the IRA. But the violence will be

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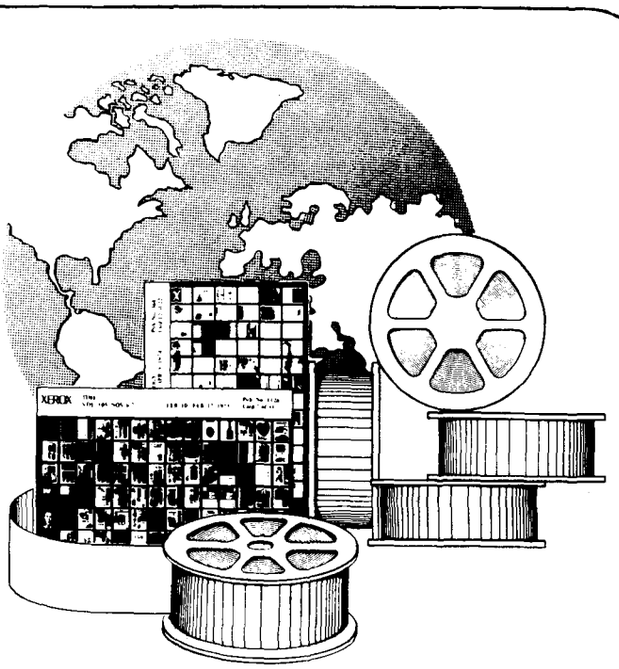

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containable as a small ugly war confined mainly to areas with a long tradition of disaffection. Politically it is unlikely that Mr Mason's latest round of talks with the parties will yield anything significant, because those politicians involved have too much to lose and too little to gain from the kind of compromise that is being asked of them. Direct rule will continue and, to be fair, most people in Northern Ireland will not mind very much as long as the violence continues to decline and the main streets of little towns long closed against the threat of bombs begin to open up again. The pressures for the dramatic British initiative which might break the deadlock and provide the basis for a permanent solution will dwindle. The foreign journalists will stay away. Until the next time.

The one mystery factor who might just change all this is to be found in Dublin in the meek and mild personage of Jack Lynch. It has always been assumed here that Mr Lynch does not care about the North, that as long as the violence does not threaten the South, and the pressures from the Republican wing of his own party do not grow, then he will be only too happy to let the English keep the North and its problems. That is rather difficult to accept just now. Since his election Mr Lynch has been quite unnecessarily firm about the North, has spoken of the need not to let things drift and his determination to increase pressure on the British Government to declare its support for a united Ireland as a preliminary to its withdrawal. Only last week he spelt it out again in the course of an interview in the *Irish Times*: there was no question of his Government dropping Ireland's territorial claim to the North until representatives of both parts of Ireland came together to draw up a new constitution for the whole island.

Political observers dismiss all this as Mr Lynch once again making the right noises to please his own party. But given his unprecedented hold on that party, his majority in the Dail, his personal popularity and the fact that no one is making noises about the North, it is hard to understand why he should be making noises to please anyone. The alternative theory is that Mr Lynch, having progressed from mere politician to elder statesman, is now inclined to try and live up to the latter role. He knows that what seems now to be the most likely scenario in the North, a diminution in the violence followed by increasing British disinterest and no significant political advance, could also be disastrous in the long run for Ireland. He believes that if a solution is not achieved this time then the opportunity will slip away for another generation. And that solution will only be achieved when the British leave Ireland and Irishmen of both communities sit down together. The problem will not go away, nor will the state of exhaustion in the North last forever, or even for very long. What will happen next time around when the violence explodes in five years or ten? It doesn't require any particular gift of prophecy to foresee that this will happen. It has happened at approximately ten-yearly intervals since the state of Northern Ireland was formed. This prospect is unlikely to worry Mr Callaghan or Mr Mason, but Mr Lynch is in a rather different situation from the other two.

He is 60 and reaching the end of a strange political career. He has no particular political loyalties – except perhaps to his party – and appears to be untouched by those beliefs and or passions that characterise most politicians. He has no Republican roots and appears to have had little feeling for what is called here 'the national question' – i.e. the North. Militant Republicans in his own party have denounced him as a traitor mainly because he didn't go to war over the North in 1969. Yet the Irish people have entrusted him with greater political power and demonstrated a greater confidence in him than they gave even to de Valera. If Mr Lynch is looking for a personal monument it is difficult to think of an act more certain to secure his place in Irish history than effecting the final withdrawal of the British from Ireland. By peaceful negotiations and without violence.

Kevin Rafferty

The Other General Zia

It will take more than Mr Callaghan's visit this week to stop Bangladesh being a forgotten land. Seven years ago the world and its politicians wept because 6 to 10 million Bengalis were uprooted. Today life is not much more than a living death for probably 70 out of 80 millions and who notices? Where is there a pipsqueak of concern? Major-General Ziaur Rahman, President and Chief Martial Law Administrator, says he cares. He has promised to set up a new political grouping to fight elections and take Bangladesh on the long road back to democracy.

He took his eyes off the flickering television set and glittered them upon me: 'We are going to change the whole approach of politics,' he said. 'From now on anyone who wants to go into politics will have to go to the people. In the past the politicians did not bother with the people: they just fought one another for what they could get. This country has many resources if only we can release them. We have got to work hard, go to the villages, go to the people.'

It was at the same time an exhilarating and a depressing performance. Exhilarating because I had never before heard a Bangladesh leader prepared to talk in such stark terms of getting on with the job; and he meant it, and proudly drew my attention to a TV programme where he had been shown going to a village and making a four-hour speech, much of which was screened. It was depressing to think of how many other leaders have made such promises and only entrenched their personal dictatorship and corrupt ways.

After two years in power Zia's personal reputation is beyond reproach. Though there were murmurs about the size of the turnout in the May referendum, it was far higher than in Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's huge 1970 victory. During his time in power Zia has survived. He has restored order to Dacca. He has fostered some useful changes. The social welfare department is doing its best to give some spark of hope to poor villagers. The General is proud of these achievements. But he has not begun to bite into the fabric to produce the radical changes needed to put the majority of Bengalis on their feet.

He might. He is himself determined to. But he is limited by the resources at his disposal. His own supposed power-base – the army – is causing trouble. To me he said, 'Leave the army to me.' But in private with Bengali friends he has confessed, (according to one confidant): 'I have a mutinous army.'

That would certainly be the conclusion from the events between the nights of 30 September and 2 October. Incidents started in Bogra (60 miles from Dacca) at about 3 a.m., when most of the troops rebelled and burst out from the cantonment to the town, firing, mainly in the air. They broke into the town jail and freed the prisoners. Then at 8 a.m. it started to rain and this doused some of the revolutionary fire. To quote one influential Bengali who is worried about the army: 'It rained and they found themselves getting wet which they did not like, so they went back to the cantonment where they could stay dry and warmer. Some revolutionaries.'

The Bogra affair was put down after 30 hours. But then two days later Dacca was caught in what might pass as a shambling (I use the word advisedly in its original bloody sense) comedy if it did not involve the armed forces and government of a country of 80 million people. One group of airmen burst into the officers' mess and killed the officers there in cold blood. Then they went to the airport control tower where senior Bangladesh officials were haggling with the Japanese Red Army hijackers. There the mutineers had the Vice-President and the civil servant head of the Foreign Ministry at their mercy but left them unharmed. They then came upon the Chief of the Air Force and at this stage – remember, they had killed several officers only minutes before – a debate apparently ensued as to whether to kill him during which the pricelessly Delphic utterance came: 'Don't shoot the chief.' He was left unhurt too.

Meanwhile in the cantonment army mutineers had the field to themselves for a while – until they came across a group of soldiers from the Dacca division, appealed to them to join the rising and were themselves shot down by their erstwhile comrades or forced to surrender.

As a coup exercise it was a mess – on both sides. A well-trained major and 120 men could have neatly sewn up the Government in an hour or so, given the lack of advance intelligence, and failure to take even elementary precautions so soon after the

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Bogra warnings. The hurried court-martial and executions only indicate the panic to restore authority and discipline.

Other repercussions are more serious. The reputation that General Zia enjoyed with the ordinary sepoys suffered a blow. Persistent rumours involved three of Bangladesh's 12 major-generals in the attempt, one of them was retired and two reshuffled in apparent demotions. Whether General Zia should worry more whether such senior men were involved, or that the mutiny was so badly botched is an arguable point. The Bangladesh army is riven with both group dissensions and personal rivalries. The cleavage between those who returned from Pakistan and those who fought the Pakistanis in the liberation war is still as dominant. But, given the weakness of the other modern forces, a well-disciplined Bangladesh army group would have enough strength to take over any government. (Such events might also make the British Government ponder its decision to set up an army staff college for Bangladesh.)

The army is only the start of General Zia's problems. So far he has hardly made any inroads into traditional politics. The old-time politicians have largely shunned him. That might not bother General Zia, given that the old politicians were a byword in corruption and self-interest. He is trying to exclude them by borrowing laws from Ayub Khan forcing them to declare their assets on pain of disqualification from elective office. But the President has to forge his own organisation and find money and men from somewhere.

After two years in power General Zia looks tired. When last year he took on the job of President it was like Lord Pooh Bah becoming Mikado as well. He is President, Chief Martial Law Administrator, Chief of Army Staff, and Head of the Ministries of Finance and Home Affairs. Perhaps he has attracted perforce men who defer to him. I sat next to the President at a small dinner recently. Apart from a senior army officer and me there was only one senior official present and if he did not quite say 'Three bags full, sir', apart from 'Yes, sir' and 'No sir', I cannot remember anything of his conversation.

But it is impossible not to like the man. General Zia would be a good advert for the very model of a modern major-general, smart, trim in body and in mind. At 43 his would-be paunch is kept in check because he plays squash and does not indulge in whisky, though his television is clearly a favoured relaxation. Such a man has little small talk or time for fanciful notions: he likes to get things done. He talked to me at length of a scheme where villagers had built a canal to straighten out the kinks in one of the rivers. If such schemes could be done all over Bangladesh, if the people could be got working, the food deficit could be wiped out. The General produced the figures, talked of the benefits to government of higher taxation from the fruits of such schemes.

If . . . Bangladesh does have terrifying poverty, a vast trade gap, a foodgrain deficit, a dependence on nature which annually provides some buffeting or other, floods, cyclones, excessive monsoons, monsoon failure, monsoon in the wrong places: but Bangladesh's problem is not simply of getting from A to B to defeat poverty. Somehow a way has to be opened for the poorest people to assert themselves. Under the veneer of a common poverty there are huge distinctions, and a system of deprivation of the very poor possibly unequalled anywhere in the world. As one of Bangladesh's brightest young officials commented to me: 'They say "form cooperatives" but that is not workable because the very poor have nothing to cooperate with, nothing to offer. They are ground right down.' By and large the men around General Zia in his new 'political' cabinet are drawn from the middle and urban classes. It will be a giant step to get them to the villages, let alone beyond.

Dacca

J. L. Pepper

Nirvana Express

'When iron birds fly in the sky, then my teaching will go to the West,' said the great Buddhist sage Padmasambhave 12 centuries ago. Now, my friend Brenda and I are, or rather were, pretty good squinting cynics of a high old Western order, respectively grammar school science mistress and BBC journalist; about as inclined towards established theologies as one would be to the enjoyment of a hole in the head; but over Christmas Brenda witnessed a small miracle just before she took wing as a nun and I experienced a series of small meditative 'visions' that have set me on the road to a Himalayan monastery, which altogether is going some.

Brenda was meditating in a *puja* or prayer meeting in the Cecil B. de Mille shrine room at Samyê-Ling Tibetan Centre in Dumfriesshire when a happy hound wandered in and parked a set of muddy paws across her lap. The *puja* was being led by His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa of Tibet; a lordly refugee in Sikkim these days since the Chinese invasion of 1959. The Karmapa spent Christmas visiting Britain and there was Brenda meditating on a thoroughly muddied skirt shortly before she was due to be scalped while drums banged, cymbals clashed and horns blew and, I used to say in the early days, the only thing missing was Errol Flynn swinging from a chandelier. Suddenly Brenda became aware of laughter rippling through the ranks of the chanting monks. She caught the eye of the Karmapa on his high cushion at the head of the room. She looked down at her spoiled dress. It was once more spotless. And the monks went giggling on.

As for me, well there I was meditating on my own in my usual fashion which in between the odd hallucinatory highlight is to say appallingly, with images of shopping lists, nuns in suspender belts and cheeky cuckoos springing out of clocks all wafting through the wind-blown collander that passes for my head, when suddenly I found myself seized by an uncontrollable shaking and a transport at an ever-accelerating rate of knots back through the peaks and valleys of my 35 years into the fierce black constriction and gasping of the womb, which grew into a mandala of revolving, overlaping fans of intensely-lit mosaics, from the centre of which I was eventually expelled into a feeling of utter rebirth; sobbing, not without joy, though with some amazement, in my lighted room. At one point during the experience I saw the clear image of a Tibetan teacher I'd just met beckoning me and saying 'Come'. He was the Ven. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, a pure Buddha like the Karmapa, and in the flash of his invitation I knew I had found my spiritual guide.

I know all this may sound a touch like Joan of Arc or even Walt Disney but nevertheless there I was a few days later with Brenda bald as a coot and me signed on as a Buddhist myself going down on all fours before another human being, even if I did drop a bit like a felled tree in my confusion, asking Kongtrul Rinpoche if I might be allowed to go and study, as a lay person and his own pupil, at the high monastery of Rumtek in Sikkim, with Kongtrul saying, unbelievably, 'That would be good,' and adding that I could help him with his English too. So with everything given up, and a suitcase for my home, and a government visa for the Indian border willing, soon I'll be setting off on the first tottering steps leading hopefully to the secret oral teachings-towards-Nirvana of the illustrious Karma Kagyu School of Tibet.

Yet I only discovered Samyê-Ling and began my meditating three months ago. The Tibetan Centre is exactly ten years old this New Year, foundation of the remarkable growth of Tibetan Buddhism throughout the West. Tibet's complex, infinitely subtle Vajrayana tantric teachings have been called 'the fast train to Enlightenment' because they offer at least the possibility of attaining the Buddha Mind or Pure Bliss in this lifetime and not, as in the case of 'lower paths', perhaps in others a few millenia hence.

The combination of this alleged efficacy together with the colourful purity of Tibetan Buddhism resulting from the country's unrelenting isolation have captured the worn Western imagination in a way that could hardly have been dreamed of by the two young men who brought it all here in the early Sixties – the Venerables Chögyam Trungpa and Shetrup Akong Tarap, great friends who fled Tibet together and went to Oxford having already served as distinguished abbots in their homeland even though they were only in their early twenties when they got to this country. Trungpa, prolific author and poet now heads the tantric teachings in America; Akong remains in charge at Samyê-Ling.

But why this Buddhist wave at all? Perhaps the truth is that it's not so much a religion, more a way of life; good, practical psychology. In three months of meditating – despite all that fluff and rubbish – there have arisen several cameo-picture solutions to seemingly intractable problems in my life that three, or 30 years of psychoanalysis might have had a hard time clearing up. At Samyê-Ling over the holiday, the gathering of New Worlders from many nations, classes and age-groups had no doubts that the many-petalled flowering of Buddhism will prove one of the great social phenomena in the West in the advancing Eighties.

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Christopher Price

Open Letter to Sir Henry Fisher

My dear Sir Henry,

I wonder if I might be allowed to congratulate you on an impeccable intellectual exercise in your report on the Confait case? Just (if you will excuse me for a moment, for this is a public letter) briefly to recap in the interests of those who are not quite sure who you are or what I am talking about:

> 1972: Three London boys found guilty at the Old Bailey of an almost simultaneous murder and arson on the evidence of their confessions alone.
> 1975: It having been established that the murder and the arson must have been several hours apart and that one boy had a cast-iron alibi for the time of the murder, and in the light of the fact that their confessions describe an *immediately* consecutive murder and arson, they are pronounced innocent in the Appeal Court by Lord Justice Scarman.
> 1977: A secret inquiry having been set up under your chairmanship, you find that they all did the arson and that two of them did the murder 'on balance of probabilities', and thus that only part of one confession is false.

Because I think the boys have now had enough publicity, I will, if you don't mind, call the one you absolve from the murder 'Bill', and the other two 'Pete' and 'Mohammed' respectively.

Perhaps I could immediately make it clear that, while I think you are wrong, I'm not complaining. After all, I begged Roy Jenkins to set up an inquiry; I was happy enough, when you were appointed. ('A cold fish, Harry,' my legal acquaintances said, 'but basically okay – very good on obscenity.' Indeed, the rebuke you received from Lord Hailsham when you resigned prematurely from the Judges' Bench in 1970 especially recommended you in my eyes. You treated the boys with unfailing courtesy at the inquiry. Nor do I complain about your general recommendations for the reform of pre-trial procedures. They are comprehensive and unimpeachable – an invaluable corpus to lay before our new embryo Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure. Inded, I suspect that your general recommendations would have been much the same, whatever verdict you had come to on the 'whodunit' issue. As I sat eyeing your impressive impassivity over those three months of private inquiry, first beneath the portraits of bewhiskered field marshals within the bankrupt United States Club in Pall Mall and then beneath the tourists in the bowels of sundry London hotels, I detected a distinct difference in your approach between your twin roles of the lawgiver Solon and the detective Sherlock Holmes. As Solon, you were outgoing, you came to life, the direction in which your mind was moving sparkled the room; as Sherlock Holmes your lids were lowered and you kept it all in your breast.

In your report, you dived into the Sherlock Holmes role with a gusto I did not think was in you. Beyond the strict call of duty. Roy Jenkins hadn't asked you specifically to pronounce on *probabilities*. A set of possibilities might well have sufficed; and in my view that would have been a far fairer approach. Having lived with the case a little longer than you have, I am nowhere near being able to pronounce on what *did* happen: or even what probably happened. With the *dramatic personae* we know. I could give a number of versions of what was theoretically possible, of which yours is only one. But I would not raise any of these theories to the level of a *probability*. I still think the most likely explanation is that Confait was murdered by someone you or I have either never heard of, or simply was one of those grey shadowy characters who flitted around the far extremeties of your report. After all *I* could have murdered Confait; I have no alibi for where I was that night; and for all I know, you could have done it.

But, of course, we didn't: we had no more motive to do it than the three boys – who didn't do it either. But you still feel after three months in judicial surroundings amidst the civilised pirouettes of well-paid QCs, watching the boys, listening to them, sifting the evidence, that they did it. And to be fair you say why. You tell us on page 9 that you find it was '*impossible* [your italics, not mine] to believe that the confessions could have been made without at least one of the boys having been involved in the killing.' Whatever the behaviour of the police had been, even if every element in the confessions had been suggested, (though you did not quite put it like that) you did not believe that such suggestions could under any circumstances emerge as the confessions before the court. That was the nub of it. Your verdict was not so much a judicial conclusion as a psychological judgment. As you make clear in your report,

evidence was adduced from the Tavistock Institute to the contrary; but you rejected it. Emerging as you had done as the eldest son of a former Archbishop of Canterbury and after your travels through the classics, the judiciary, the city and back to Oxford again, you adjudge yourself fully competent as a psychologist to reject *absolutely* a hypothesis put forward by a reputable expert.

It is here, in my belief, that the flaw in the report lies, and I will illustrate, if I may, by your treatment of 'Pete' as a witness. (He is one of the two re-implicated in the Fisher Report in both the killing and the arson.) Most of Pete's life so far has been unhappy – his father walked out at the age of two and he was brought up by his grandmother in an environment of emotional disturbance and economic oppression. You discourse on this at some length. But then you choose to quote two incidents which you make clear are factors which helped to convince you of his guilt.

You mention first an incident during the inquiry when 'Pete' was being interrogated about previous incidents of fire-raising by Mr Donald Farquharson, QC, for the police, – a lawyer of admirable parts except for the nasal, rasping timbre of his voice which, I may say, was irritating even me to the point of silent implosion. 'Pete' had just undergone from Farquharson an enforced catechism on his deprived childhood – a difficult ordeal for a boy like him, especially since he had the impression (rightly, as it turned out) that he was being tried for the third time for an offence he did not commit. You record for the world at large how 'Pete' (under his real name) reacted:

> 'I told you I do not know. If you keep on, mate, I will knock you one', and then got up and walked out of the room saying: 'I have fucking had enough of this.' Later, when it was put to him that in 1972 he was capable of standing up for himself, he said, 'I was only 15. Let them try to do it now; let them take me down the station now, and I will kill the cunts.'

There were other verbal ripostes, Sir Henry, that proved embarrassing to other witnesses, including to some of the police. These are not recorded verbatim. At the outset, you and Roy Jenkins turned down the request of the boys and myself for a *public* inquiry; one of the inevitable results was to leave decisions over the selection of the published verbatim evidence wholly to you.

The second incident was the revelation in a confidential social services document of a chance remark by a woman suffering from senile dementia that might have linked Pete to Confait. (It is interesting to note that, unlike Lewisham Social Services Department, the police denied you their confidential reports.) It was 'evidence' on which no court of law would have placed the slightest reliance. You, however, put *some* reliance on it partly, you make clear, because 'Pete' refused to come back after his evidence to deny verbally for the umpteenth time that he had ever known Confait.

You spend much space on these two episodes. The conclusions you drew from them puzzled me. The first certainly established 'Pete' as being thoroughly disturbed and unhappy with the whole inquiry and its judicial environment. But as a 'probable' liar, a murderer and an arsonist, Sir Henry?

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The second was a third-hand phrase, the like of which you rejected time and again in other parts of your report. Fair, Sir Henry? I had hoped that after the Scarman verdict, the evidence of each and every witness, particularly of the boys and the police, might be treated as of equal potential veracity once more. That was not the impression I received from those parts of your report which concerned the examination of 'Pete's' evidence.

And then there was your treatment of 'Mohammed'. A confident boy, you say. How could he be bullied? (Five-and-a-half years ago he was a frightened 14-year-old.) And you conclude (by inference) that since 'Pete' *probably* murdered Confait and since (dubiously in my view) it *must* have taken two to do it, 'Mohammed' must have held his arms. True, you never say so in as many words. That's the problem with 'probabilities'. You can use as many or as few details as you like. You can wound or strike at will: so 'Mohammed' who never confessed to any murder, who was never charged with it at the Old Bailey, is now branded. Fair?

Just a further word on the 'balance of *probabilities*' – of which you conspicuously outline only one. It is a fine judicial phrase, though its precise meaning does not exactly shine out of the headlines in the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*, which have effectively set up the environment in which these three boys will have to live for the next few years. Nor has any appeal court judgment on a murder case ever been so publicly and officially qualified in such a way in the history of the English criminal law. So your responsibility in this matter was substantial. But in addition to the actual evil effects of the way you phrased your judgment, my Oxford friends, who know all about probability theory, tell me you have got it all wrong as an academic also. You have used subjective probability criteria ('it seems to *me* that it most likely happened thus') and presented the result to the public as an objective probability fact.

Indeed, if I was not writing such a mild, uncomplaining letter I would say you did a hatchet job on 'Pete' and 'Mohammed'. But that would be unfair. Perhaps I could simply put it like this: you, with your background soaked in the English Establishment, are just as much a prisoner within your cultural horizons as 'Pete' and 'Mohammed' are in theirs. Humility might have counselled a certain hesitancy about probabilities; an instinct that there might be a psychological process beyond the horizon of your class and culture under which a skilful and intricate web of fantasy and verismilitude can come pouring out in confession form under pressure from the requisite suggestions; that the effect of a simultaneous terror of, and desire to, please authority, combined with a powerful longing to go home (you remember that νοστον μελιηδεα in Homer), might induce a phenomenon beyond your experience and imagination. But then your particular Odyssey has not taken you along these paths, and, like the creatures in Plato's cave, if there is something you cannot see, you are able to convince yourself that it does not exist.

In a way, I suppose, the report has simply strengthened the social and cultural convictions of all concerned: the general public – many of whom had made up their minds along the lines of your report long before it appeared; the lawyers – right at the start of the campaign, a full year before the boys were released or your inquiry appointed, barristers would come up to me in the House of Commons and give me your final scenario (they all seemed to know more about it than I did). Even if you had never come out with the verdict you did, the masonic fraternity of the Bar had already made up its mind.

It is salutary to remember that it was the lawyers, rather than the police, who created the mess in the first place, and that most of them were carefully placed beyond the reach of criticism by your terms of reference. Mr Richard du Cann, nobly, bears his share of criticism, of some of which, you, with equal nobility, relieve him and hand on to the police. But the lawyers have done rather better than the police in the distribution of the many hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money spent by authority on the Confait case in the trials and the inquiry so far.

And the boys. Your report has strengthened their social and cultural beliefs also. Of course, they lost their jobs the day of your verdict. In our discussions over the past few years, I have made desultory attempts to convince them that life need not always be a squalid confidence trick operated by the rich and educated against the poor and inarticulate. I shall no longer try to do so. They were right and I was wrong. After Scarman had pronounced them innocent, there was some chance that they might have received just a crumb from all that public money into their own pockets; your verdict is calculated (I used the word in its exact legal sense) to ensure that even that consolation is in any event decimated and perhaps removed entirely. If they (or their children – 'Pete' and 'Mohammed' have both just become fathers) get into trouble in the future, I'm sure you will not be surprised; I think your report will also be partly responsible.

I hope you will allow me a little smattering of Latin before I close. You will be aware that, in that most delectable of hexameters at the end of Georgic II, '*Felix qui potuit rarum cognoscere causas*', Vergil was worshipping his hero, the poet Lucretius, for achieving a fortunate scientific insight by combining poetry with philosophy. If you have failed to achieve the Vergilian felicity I had expected of you, it is because your report is too prosaic. It lacks poetic imagination. You have concentrated on identifying the exact nature of each individual tree, when you were asked to describe the wood; in as much as you have prescribed general recommendations about access to solicitors and parents for children and other detainees, I fear they have already been vitiated by your verdict on the particulars. I hope I am wrong; it is now up to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, of which I very much hope you will be appointed a member, to make further recommendations; and then for Parliament to legislate. Perhaps in a decade or so.

Yours sincerely,

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Tim Albert

How to Damn an Experiment

On the third Monday of October a small group of 13-year-olds in a Midlands comprehensive school took part in a lesson on swearing. The 24 children involved, who had only recently (if somewhat reluctantly) been reorganised from a traditional secondary modern into this new, innovative and purpose-built comprehensive, discussed the origins of some common swear words (dividing them into misused words, blasphemy, traditional and lavatorial) and looked at such uncontroversial questions as 'Why do people swear?' and 'What would you do if your 13-year-old son/daughter came home and started swearing?'. Somewhat ludicrously, this lesson has now become the centre of a storm which threatens the future of the school, and which itself could provide the basis not only for a useful lesson on the apparent impossibility of bringing about educational change in this country, but also on how political dogma coupled with uninformed parental competitiveness can wreck painstaking and well-meaning educational experiments.

The swear-word lesson, which 13 other groups also did last term and which the school had been teaching for four years without complaint, this time happened to shock a group of parents, already unhappy about what was happening at the school. With the support of a local independent district councillor and governor (a general practitioner who cheerfully admits that he sends his children to independent schools) they secretly formed a small action group. By-passing such normal channels as governors' meetings and divisional education offices, the complaints sped straight to county hall. The first the head knew of it was when, nearly a month after the original incident, he was summoned to appear before the county's chief executive on 25 November. On the day he did so the county council published a statement saying that following 'representations', and with 'the concurrence of the headmaster', an 'independent project group served by a team of education inspectors will examine the school in depth'. It also noted that the head had been advised not to make any public comment.

Notwithstanding this admonition (perhaps even because of it?) the press, national and local, devoured the story. 'Lessons in Swearing' said the *Daily Mail*, while the *Daily Mirror* gushed 'Parents Cane the Cursing Classes'. The local paper had several field days leading page one for several weeks on the issue, trundling out Rhodes Boyson for a fourth week 'Leading education expert MP Rhodes Boyson has called for a public inquiry . . .' and having several pages of letters from the supportive to the downright hysterical: one pointed out that the kind of lessons being given in the school were not going to 'help our children get an apprenticeship or a job in the bank . . . Whatever happened to lessons like geography and physics?' it asked.

Other complaints emerged, though these have still not been formally listed by the county council and in some cases they came through the doubtful medium of anonymous telephone calls: an assistant caretaker, ran one complaint, had a conviction for homosexuality (as soon as this was discovered, he had been dismissed); children were having to commute from building to building, and didn't have the traditional corporate act of worship (attacks that could be levelled against most schools in the country); and that the headmaster sent his own daughter to another school (not strictly true, since he sent her only for one A-level out of three, since otherwise she would literally have been in a class of her own).

On the face of it, apart from isolated pockets of bitterness, the whole affair would seem to be comparatively mild, little more than another storm in one of those durable school teacups, and worth at most an adviser's report and a special meeting of the governors. But in addition there are two important factors: one is that the school, the Sutton Centre in Sutton-in-Ashfield, is generally held up as a showpiece for progressive and successful comprehensive education, and the other is that a few months before the incident, the control of the county council passed from the Labour to the Conservative Party.

At best one would expect the Tories to be broadly out of sympathy with the intentions of the Sutton Centre. Originally designed to give a boost to a rather glum and ill-served community, it was intended to complement a new shopping centre, library and town swimming pool. It would be a multi-purpose community college, with a comprehensive school as well as social and recreational facilities, from an old people's day centre to an ice rink. In line with this policy the then-Labour controlled education authority appointed as head Stewart Wilson, the former head of a large Teesside comprehensive, who with careful planning, hard work, and an exceptionally loyal staff, began to create an exciting new kind of school. 'We don't believe in original sin,' he told me when I first visited a year ago, 'we start from the premise that kids are basically good.'

Out went such mainstays of contemporary education as buildings (and lessons) barred to parents, uniforms and bells, 40-minute periods and staff rooms for teachers. Instead the children are divided into mixed ability groups of 24 (a ratio made possible by the fact that staff have agreed to give up their free periods). Each group has a short session with their group tutor, and then goes on for a 2½-hour session in the morning and another in the afternoon, with breaks taken when the work allows. The curriculum is therefore divided into ten (English drama and literature, maths, sciences, European studies, creative arts, environmental studies, sport and leisure, personal relationships, technical studies, and home management) with two withdrawal departments, one for remedial work and one for media studies. Pupils are encouraged to come back for an additional 11th session in the evening, take the CSE Mode III examination (which allows the teachers to draw up their own syllabus) and keep regular log books.

But what may have really singled out the school was the fact that it seemed to be working extremely well. Nearly all children came back for the 11th session, vandalism became virtually non-existent and employers said they would be happy to accept CSE Mode IIIs. The Sutton Centre began to attract attention from respected educationists, including Harry Rée, who selected the school as an example of what a good community school could achieve in the part he took in the BBC's contribution to the great education debate. He says he was most impressed, noting for example that kids in the maths department seemed interested in their subject in a way which he had never seen before, and that in general it was not only an interesting testing ground but also a good school in its own right.

Normally, therefore, one would imagine that this little local difficulty about swearing would have been solved fairly easily. Indeed a potentially more serious crisis had already been handled smoothly when a teacher who had been transferred to the school insisted on talking about his sex life to the pupils; he was dismissed and later lost his appeal. This time, however, an important change had taken place, following the local government elections. The long-serving Labour councillor who was chairman of the Board of Governors, and who had built up a good relationship with the head, was replaced by a Tory nominee, an ex-army major who had visited the school only once, at the invitation of the head, before facing him on the opposite side of the table at the county hall meeting of 24 November. This meant, simply, that the normal checks and balances that usually operate in this case had been by-passed, (indeed two meetings of governors convened to discuss the forthcoming inquiry were effectively rendered ineffective) and it means that the most reasonable explanation for the insistence on a public enquiry, when only 31 parents out of about 2,000 had registered their complaints, is that political motives have in this case been allowed to get out of hand.

Meanwhile, back at the school, staff morale has plummeted and pupil vandalism has broken out. The National Union of Teachers has insisted that the study is done by professionals, and the HMI have agreed to do a full inspection, but many people feel that already the damage has been done. 'We were so nearly there,' one teacher told me in an eloquent epitaph for educational innovation. 'Of course we'd had our problems but the sad thing is that we were beginning to come out of them. If only they'd left us alone.' As the dust begins to settle on the unimplemented Taylor report, whose sensible recommendations would at least ensure that political gangsterism is kept under control by strong boards of governors and properly laid down procedures, the future of the Sutton Centre is well worth thinking about.

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New York Diary

☐ Outside Cairo and Jerusalem, New York is the city in the world most currently committed to the Middle East drama. With every fresh reported wrinkle from that quarter, huddles really do form at parties, in bars and other places of public resort. Of course, this is notoriously the centre of that Jewish intellectual (and just Jewish) pressure which no Administration dares defy. But Arab interest is present as well. I spent some time with my friend Edward Said, a Palestinian and a professor of literature at Columbia, who was recently nominated by Sadat as a possible proxy for the PLO at Geneva. He didn't want to go, and regards the present horse-trading with suspicion, as likely to override Palestinian aspirations. But as a critical observer (combining membership of the Palestine National Council with his status as almost the only Arab who writes on the subject for the *New York Times*), he has to admit that the PLO has thus far failed to generate any alternative policy. Best known in the US for his literary work, which extends from Conrad to orientalism, Said is a refugee and a socialist whose private life is dominated by the tragedy of his people. He told me that his family home in Jerusalem was occupied by Martin Buber after 1948. 'So his "I and Thou" has a special poignancy for me.'

☐ Rupert Murdoch's enterprise in this town is doing encouragingly badly for itself, and depressingly badly by the readers. An excellent article on his *New York Post* takeover in *Politicks* magazine describes Murdochian journalism as 'supporting New York about as much as graffiti supports a wall'. New lows of taste are plumbed almost every week; soft targets getting priority. The man likes to claim that his endorsement of Edward Koch washed that worthy ahead in the mayoral race. Certainly a large number of the *Post* staff complained about the lack of objectivity in the campaign coverage; but there is no good evidence that the paper's flagrant line made any difference. For instance, Murdoch wanted Edward Costikyan, an old-time pol and anti-union figure, to be made first deputy mayor. Koch has announced that the job will not be filled by Costikyan or anyone else. Murdoch's men are now being asked to stress Koch's unkept promises (after eight weeks). The same fickleness and pettishness with which Murdoch savaged Whitlam are getting a rerun here.

☐ This week the mayor's office announced an end to all job discrimination against homosexuals, which is the right kind of reply to the whispering campaign directed at the bachelorhood of the mayor-elect. There are a couple of unions which will fight this to the last; they are the police union and, for some reason, the firemen's as well. Here in faggot city it's not hard to get an instant *vox populi* on these things and I was touched by the response of a gay brother in the Village who said that in his experience cops and firemen were among New York's most deeply committed homosexuals. 'It may be the uniform', he mused, 'but I think it's the comradeship.' Anyway, with both services badly understaffed they can't turn any able bodies away. From now on it can be the Theban Band at the Precinct station, and I can't think of a better crime-busting team.

☐ The Latinisation of the United States continues apace, with New York lying just behind Los Angeles and of course Miami (those versatile Cubans). There are now announcements in Spanish on the subway, and a couple of Spanish dailies as well as many magazines. One area of town is now populated entirely by Dominicans, with Columbians and others mounting fast (it begins to sound like a series of religious orders). As a political constituency, Spanish surnames have not yet taken shape for a combination of reasons. The first is that many of this latest wave are illegal. The second is that those from Puerto Rico, like the Irish in Britain, can travel freely to and from their native heath and often send children home. Finally, there are regional and national differences. But there could be a powerful new bloc here for somebody (Herman Badillo having just resigned his Congressional seat to work for Koch). It might be something to watch and, considering the countries of origin, quite an opportunity for the Left. Which would make a change.

☐ Here is a story which illustrates the less adorable side of New York feminism. At a predominantly *progressiste* party in Brooklyn Heights I met a girl who, when I mentioned my visit to Chile, told me, 'Yeah, we had some Chilean women here protesting about their husbands disappearing at home. Their government took their passports away while they were here at the UN. We kinda thought we'd give them a hand, but it was tough getting movement women to endorse the campaign.' Why was that, I wondered. 'Well, these Chileans were just sort of into their *husbands*, right? There wasn't terrific excitement about that.'

☐ On the basis that once you owe the bank enough money, you own the bank, New York is doing very well. Its bankruptcy is now something permanent; its debts practically uncollectable by any human agency. The banks, in any case, have a bad conscience (one writes that metaphorically, wondering if it can really be true) about the way that they have speculated in city securities and left their host town to rot around them. You can read about a new symptom, or observe for yourself the decay of public service almost every day. In one incident, construction workers call the papers to say that the elevated railway above them has been raining lumps of metal for weeks, and that their protests to the authorities are ignored. Housing and schools are an old story. Best of all is the way that nobody wastes any time thinking of how to make things better; many people insisting that the place suffers from too much public spending rather than too little (does that remind you of anything?). And, of course things can always get worse. 'In this town', I was told, 'the light at the end of the tunnel is New Jersey.'

☐ *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* is a fairly good movie, although lacking utterly in tension or menace. It, and the UFO idea, have become not so much a cult as an actual superstition, with the catchline 'We are not alone' assuming religious overtones. One weekly critic compared his viewing with 'seeing God . . . the ultimate experience which the human mind is capable of [sic], one of absolute ecstasy: frightening, overwhelming, invigorating and very, very sexual'. The papers spend ever more time checking out garbage about UFO incidents, with President Carter claiming he saw one and even the *Wall Street Journal* actually front-paging a real turkey of a story last month. It recalls Chesterton's remark (perceptive until you read it twice) that when people cease to believe in God they do not believe in nothing but in anything.

☐ There is a really noticeable Anglophilia about New York publishing and reviewing. British authors and writers seem, happily, to get a big slice of the action on both counts. An editorial friend was recently in the Madison Avenue Bookstore, one of the city's classiest, and noticed a whole shelf of Crossman's *Diaries*. She asked the proprietor how he expected to shift such a large investment. 'No problem', he replied. 'We have a heap of customers with a standing order for anything at all on British espionage.'

☐ Taxi-driver stories are, admittedly, journalistic pabulum. But how would you have answered the Polish chauffeur who suddenly asked me, 'What's the exact opposite word for compassion?'. Impressed and troubled, I came up with 'apathy', only to find that I had been lured into the standard conversation about how some guys have more sympathy for the criminal than the victim. Stronger evidence of erudition comes at second hand. Scrod is a very popular New England fish dish. An eager Bostonian hails a cab at Grand Central and asks the driver to take him 'someplace where I can get scrod'. 'Buddy,' says the man at the wheel, 'I been asked that many times but this is the first inna pluperfect subjunctive.'

Christopher Hitchens

This America

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard

☐ **Nobody was shot dead in Chicago during the weekend police said yesterday. The last recorded gun murder took place six days ago. – *Daily Telegraph* (E. G. Breeze)**

☐ **A long-term study of contraceptive methods is highly favourable to the diaphragm, with researchers finding 'no material risks' other than pregnancy. – *International Herald Tribune* (C. P. Hennessey)**

☐ **Senator Conor Cruise O'Brien said yesterday that if Irish politicians would stop 'trotting over to Britain and America' about the affairs of the North, it would help the situation there. He was speaking in London to the Royal Institute of International Affairs. – *Irish Press* (D. Lertford)**

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Maurice Yaffé

Don't Call Us

Not long ago the Post Office celebrated its centenary; the other day profits of over £264m. for the previous twelve months were announced for the Telecommunications service alone.

The conclusions of last year's *Which?* report on the telephone service indicated however that 'subscribers no longer seem to get as good value for money . . . as they did in 1969'. Costs have increased markedly, with no improvement in reliability; and the operator service 'seems to have got worse, with subscribers, on average, having to wait longer for the exchange to answer'. My recent experiences with this branch of the Post Office may well help others to avoid the pitfalls which befell me.

During the past year I found myself spending an increasing length of time in the day away from home, returning more often than not late at night. Friends told me they were finding it impossible to make contact: so one bright day in September I decided to explore ways of keeping in touch. The telephone seemed the obvious medium, and I investigated how messages could be taken on my behalf, for later collection. It became clear very quickly that there were two possibilities: having a tape system which records messages, or an answering service, where messages are taken personally; I opted for the latter, for it seemed more personal, and as far as I could see at the time, there did not appear to be much difference in the cost.

The salesman from the answering service company, when I explained why I was interested in becoming a client, showed me a device which he promised would work in the darkest recesses of practically any building within a radius of two miles – 24 hours a day; this, apparently, was their 'personal paging' service. That I could do without; just imagine a night at the opera, or a sensitive moment in one's relationship . . . ruined for the sake of a bleep; so after due thought I confirmed that I wanted to have the standard answering service. I was told by the amazingly friendly lady who worked in the contract department of the organisation (from the start she called me by my first name, and spoke to me as if we were life-long friends, with such endearments as dearie and love), that since I did not live within a radius of two-three miles of their office I would need to arrange with the Post Office what is called a transfer service. This meant that the telephone operator at the exchange would intercept any calls to my number when I was not at home and refer the caller to the number of the answering service.

Needless to say it took the Post Office twice as long to 'lay their cable' as the answering service people said it would – one month, in fact. For the first few days the transfer operator intercepted calls all right, but merely told callers that their calls had 'mis-routed' to the exchange by mistake. When the information finally got through to the transfer service staff from the sales office, after persistent and regular calls by me, they failed to give callers the relevant extension number; so when callers rang the answering service number and asked for me, they were acidly informed by the operator on their switchboard that there were over 600 'companies' on their books and he or she would have to give an extension in order to be put through anyway.

This really confused my friends who had no idea of where they were calling: after all, who, when not at work, has an extension, especially at weekends? Several knew, of course, that I worked at a hospital, but also knew that the number given to them by the operator was definitely not that. This happened for a couple of weeks to the few people who had the persistence to hold on to the line. But sometimes the phone was left to ring over 20 times (and on one memorable occasion over 50 times!) before it was answered either by the exchange or the answering service: I know this because I tested the effectiveness of the 'service' every few days. Under ordinary circumstances, if the phone of the person we are calling is allowed to ring over ten times we assume either they are not there or do not want to answer, but my surrogate secretary did not seem to want to know . . .

But that was not the worst of the matter: I was not informed at any time, except by chance in a passing conversation with the transfer operator with whom I had become quite friendly – in sheer desperation – by this time, that there was a *charge* for *every* transaction by the operator at the exchange; it now costs 30p every time the operator flicks the switch to put one's line on transfer or to restore it to normal service. For me this would have amounted to over £200 per year in addition to the usual rental charges, £45 per quarter to the answering service, and £5 per quarter to the Post Office for the general transfer service charge – let alone payment for out-going calls.

As soon as I heard about these extra charges (in the middle of January) I wrote strongly worded letters to both the Post Office Sales Department and the manager of the answering service firm, and waited for the replies. And waited. After three weeks still nothing (perhaps the epidemic is spreading to the postal system, I thought), and so I telephoned the answering service. When I eventually got through to my life-long friend, I told her in no uncertain terms that I wanted to cancel my contract, and expected my money back. She agreed instantly, though it took months to come through. A day or so afterwards the man from the PO Sales telephoned out of the blue and said he was sorry. No more, no less. The new facility he described, whereby one can transfer one's own calls at home, came as no consolation.

Clearly, the answering service and the Post Office telecommunications system are somewhat less than efficient as separate enterprises; more's the pity that in combination they are lethal.

My fortunes changed however in February when I had an answering machine installed at home; this time there was a delay of only a couple of weeks while I waited for the Post Office to fit the necessary jack plug – charge £6 and 15p per quarter thereafter. The model of machine I actually chose has a rather remarkable facility, which seemed – on the face of it – too good to be true; it is possible, believe it or not, to recall messages directly merely by telephoning one's own number and stating a verbal code, wherever one might happen to be at the time. In other words, one can collect messages at one's own convenience without having to go home to do so.

Remote collection of messages makes the system ideal for my own needs, but it's expensive. It puts about £2.50 on the weekly rental of the machine, bringing the total to six pounds or thereabouts on a three year contract, and this is paid quarterly in advance. Contracts come in one, three, or seven year packages and there are substantial reductions for the longer terms; but seven years seems a long time to be committed to a contract. So far I have no complaints: after-sales service seems to be both reliable and efficient.

One of the first messages I received was from a young-sounding fellow I did not know, who called himself George: 'I don't know who you are,' he said after my opening announcement, 'but I hope you get over the 'flu soon.' Amazing, especially since the dreaded virus didn't catch up with me until the following week.

Roger Woddis

Dear Morarji

A microphone inadvertently picked up a suggestion by President Carter to Cyrus Vance that a strong note be sent to Mr Desai, Indian Prime Minister, about nuclear safeguards.

I must admit you're pretty swell,
Saying you're not upset and all
By what I said to Cyrus.
Relations-wise, I'm mad as hell,
But publicly I'm walking small
And carnally desirous.

This letter, far from cold and blunt,
Expresses all I truly feel
Concerning nuclear fuel.
The question that we now confront
Is whether we can do a deal
By meaningful reviewal.

If you want heavy water, fine,
I'll let you have the stuff, but say,
Cut out the 'Gimme, gimme.'
So let me lay it on the line –
Just change the way you spell Bomb-bay.
Yours most sincerely, Jimmy.

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Here We Go Again

Foreign visitors to our shores, no longer a purely seasonal phenomenon but, like cucumbers and globe artichokes and pineapples, now so fully available on every day of the year that one sometimes tires of them, find themselves faced in London by various perplexities. For example, there is the fact, to which the permanent residents are now sadly accustomed, that the most popular numbered motor buses travel along, at half-hourly intervals, in a communally self-protective pack like wildebeests, nose to tail in clutches of five (I once saw eight No 14s, queen of buses, jammed together in Shaftesbury Avenue at 2.25 p.m., but perhaps they were returning from a reunion lunch at a chic Soho pizza parlour, or were on their way to a matinée). There is also the fact that, unless humans open their mouths to speak, it is no longer possible to tell, from the clothes they are wearing, which person is what. A camouflage of general subfusc and dirty-jeaned drabness covers everybody and we merge into the background. The French, tremendous snobs despite that rather showy and ostentatious Revolution, are for ever peering about for *les milords anglais* whom they still imagine to be bowling along in their Rolls and shrieking insults ('Cow!' 'Villain!') at the chauffeur down a gold-plated speaking-tube, little realising that that shifty, down-at-heels creature beside them in the bus queue is either a *milord* or just a lord, off to pocket his daily attendance fee at the House.

Then there is the question of surnames. Although brought up in their foreign schools and led, in their English language lessons, to think that every other British person is called either Smith or Brown (*'Que fait Madame Smith?'* 'She is steaming her pudding'. *'Was macht Frau Brown?'* 'She is making jokes and laughing "Ho ho" '), the evidence of their eyes on hoardings and walls, on the backs of bus seats and chalked on pavements, tells them otherwise. I am speaking, of course, of the extensive Wanks family, ever anxious to leave behind them proof that they, or one of their close friends, has been present. On entering an underground station, it is in no way surprising to see, scratched up in the passage-way that leads trackwards, the proud names of Les Wanks, Stan Wanks and Rod Wanks. Sometimes just initials are used – P.H. Wanks, N.R. Wanks. Occasionally there is a generous measure of admiration and praise for the entire, and predominately male, family ('There's nothing like a few good Wanks'). Once again, the poor Frogs find themselves baffled (*'Qui sont ces Wanks?'*). The bearers of this name are, I incline to think, not from the upper-crust and they tend to favour shortened Christian names with rather a lower-crust lilt to them – Len, Perce, Sid. I have yet to see any mention of Peregrine Wanks, Jocelyn Wanks or Osbert Wanks. Perhaps I don't go to the right walls.

There is one perplexity which will not at once offer itself as such to foreign visitors. To be aware of it one needs to have been frequently resident in the capital. It concerns pigeons. In the thousands of miles that I have walked and hours that I have spent and years that I have lived in London, I have never once seen a *dead* pigeon, apart from those served up on a plate, partly disguised by *les légumes* and masquerading as *poulet*, in wartime restaurants. But among the millions of pigeons that exist in London, many thousands must daily die. Where, then, do they do it? Certainly not on streets or pavements, nor do they come plopping lifelessly out of the sky onto one's nut. Have they I wonder, like elephants, some secret, secluded haunt (screened off section of the Mansion House roof? A disused ventilator shaft at what was dear old Pontings?) known to them all and to which, at the approach of the dread hour, they flap and, in messy roof-top confusion, turn up their pigeon toes? And what then, there being no vultures (none with wings, anyhow) hereabouts to tidy them up and pick the bones clean?

I peered about for dead pigeons (no dice) on my way through St James's Park, bound for St James's Palace to see, on view as I write, the representative display of gifts lavished on the Queen at her jolly Silver Jubilee. Well aware that many NS readers are territorially denied these treats, I bring from time to time, as you know, news of such matters, in this case in fuller detail than in a recent reference in these pages and for those who missed BBC-2's guided tour. Here again are perplexities galore for foreigners (the queue was stiff with them) who, from some of the gifts, will form a very odd view of Her Majesty's activities. What, for example, does she get up to with a necklace made of teeth, a cowhide (which I take to be the outside of a dead cow rather than a nature-lover's foliage-bedecked Wendyhouse from which secretly to observe cows), and a membership badge of a Welsh Trampoline Club (can there be a Palace rumpus-room with the sovereign bouncing healthfully up and down?). Then what can overseas visitors, not to speak of ourselves or the recipient herself, possibly make of two miniature chairs fashioned from tin cans, a red, white and blue felt donkey, a tinsel sash, an 18th-century pewter syringe ('This may hurt you a little'), a carving of two Maoris kissing and a large sago pot?

Members of the royal family clearly have very little time for reading, even if their inclinations actually led that way, and therefore, as the donors obviously realised, almost any book comes as a delightful novelty. One can picture the unfamiliar objects being passed excitedly from hand to hand at breakfast, and striking passages read out. Certain of the volumes presented lend themselves admirably to this treatment – *History of Sidcup Cricket Club*, *Caring for Textiles* and *East Gwilliambury in the 19th Century*. Purely visual pleasures have not been neglected and photographs and paintings have come pouring in. During that spare five minutes before the next Ambassador presents his credentials (and whatever can they be? Do they ever forget them? *'Where* are your credentials?'), Her Majesty can feast her eyes on Sherwood Forest, an oil platform, the Ilfracombe Corps of Drums, Stockton-on-Tees, 'a picture of two people reading *The Times*' and Queen Victoria done in needlework.

One item I at first found very worrying, 'a Greetings telegram in stainless steel'. Could this be some new Post Office wheeze to bump up the already outrageous price ('We also have them in burnished gold'), or a clever method of preventing them being blown away at the front door as you sign for them, in which case telegrams made of lead might be even better? However, I now see that this extremely unusual gift comes from the Lord Mayor and Citizens of Sheffield, clearly advertising home products. Another item that I don't quite follow comes from Members of the Diplomatic Corps, who decided to hand over 'a dinner table' (something to put that sago pot on at last). How has the Queen been managing hitherto, one wonders? Plastic telly-trays perched on her knees? Indeed, there are indications that when donors decide to club together, they rather lose their heads – the people of Newfoundland (a book containing 300,000 signatures), the Shell Co. Ltd (snaps of fireworks), the California Historical Society ('a printed resolution').

What anxious discussions as to a suitable present went on, I ask myself, in the Vatican? I was once in St Peter's Square on Easter Day and got blessed, along with a million others, by the Pope. He appeared to us high up at a very non-grand window that looked to belong to a housemaid's bedroom. One almost expected to see long black stockings hanging out to dry. It was a pleasing little ceremony and one that our Archbish, the clergy being so woefully uncolourful, might well copy from some attic window in Lambeth Palace. His Holiness seemed a delightfully simple, modest personality and his gift to the Queen is in keeping with it. Just a bible: and a second-hand one at that.

SOMETHING YOU OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT

The pressures of modern life tend to distract our attention from fundamental realities. There is a spiritual basis to life which many of us are now ignoring at the cost of our happiness and security. There are some eternal verities behind the teachings of all religions. In your own interest, learn something about these from THEOSOPHY, the Ageless Wisdom Religion.

Write for information to:

The Blavatsky Trust (L)
P.O. Box 16, London W3 6HS

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Letters to the Editor

In Begin's Court

Sir, Like so many Israeli propagandists, Paul Lax (Letters 23 & 30 December) further weakens an already shaky case for the territorial expansion of Israel by saying that Israel has 'been victim of four aggressive wars'. Perhaps he would specify – or shall I do it for him?

(1) In May 1948, when Jewish forces had already occupied much of the area in Palestine allocated to an Arab state, and had dispossessed more than a quarter of a million Palestinian Arabs, the armies of Egypt and Transjordan intervened to prevent the Israelis from overrunning the rest of Palestine.

(2) In October 1956, in collusion with Britain and France, the Israelis invaded Egypt and occupied the whole of Sinai and the Gaza Strip, from which they were later forced to withdraw by Eisenhower's threat that if they persisted in their aggressive action he would discontinue the US economic aid to Israel.

(3) In June 1967, by a series of threats to his Arab partners, the Israelis provoked Nasser into adopting an aggressive stance and then – without even considering the alternative of diplomacy – immediately launched a meticulously planned and brutally executed war against Egypt and Syria.

(4) In 1973, after trying by all peaceful means to obtain the implementation of UN resolutions calling for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories, Sadat launched a war to achieve the same objective. The war, like all the Arab-Israeli wars, was fought on Arab territory, with the Israelis trying to consolidate their hold on land that did not belong to them, and the Arabs trying to regain what had been taken from them by force.

If there are still readers of the NEW STATESMAN ingenuous enough to believe in the legend of a poor little Israel which has 'been victim of four aggressive wars', it is time they started thinking for themselves.

MICHAEL ADAMS
Editor

Middle East International
21 Collingham Road
London SW5

Friends Apart

Sir, Mr Glen Davies of *Isis*, writing the University Forum feature in your issue of 16 December, stated in his first paragraph that student journalism is 'under-researched'. He can say that again. Here are nine corrections to his article that he should file for future reference:

(1) Self-Help was never at any time under any illusions that *Isis* is not what it was. But despite its deterioration into the trendy hotchpotch it now is, the Self-Help Organisation offered to keep it going because it believes that the freedom of the press is indivisible and must be maintained for the bad and the trivial, as well as the good.

(2) The Dowager Lady Birdwood is not and never has been a member of the National Front, Column 88 or, for that matter, Group 62.

(3) I have not been a member of the Conservative Party for the last 15 years.

(4) George Street Minimarket Ltd never at any time had any connection with the Freedom Group.

(5) If there is a West End Minimarket Ltd, neither my wife, nor I, nor the Freedom Group, nor the Self-Help Organisation have ever had any connection with it.

(6) Self-Help has never claimed to have printed an issue of the *TV Times*. Those who purported to be *Isis* executives were, however, told that an earlier independent press organisation (the Freedom Group) had done so during the big general printing strike in 1959. Incidentally, the same organisation also printed the *Listener* for the BBC during the same strike. (Mr Davies cannot, apparently, even get it right despite the use of secretly taped telephone conversations.)

(7) Every employee of the White Eagle Press has a reasonable grasp of the English language. It would be difficult for them to produce the newspaper, magazines, books and leaflets they print in English without it.

(8) Almost every donation Self-Help receives is by cheque and not in cash as Mr Davies says. Mr Doig has never returned to George Street with a donation in 'a plastic bag full of pound notes'.

(9) The Self-Help Organisation did not run Operation Pony Express for Mr George Ward of Grunwick. This was handled by NAFF, who did a most commendable and successful job.

EDWARD MARTELL

87 George Street
London W1

Sir, With regard to the article by Glen Davies two mis-statements require correction, namely 'It was Self-Help who ran "Operation Pony Express" and . . . the (Self-Help) helped in 1975 to set up the National Association for Freedom . . .'

Both statements are entirely inaccurate. The clearance of the backlog of mail at Grunwick was organised by me with the assistance of colleagues within NAFF and its supporters all over the country. At no time was there any contact or communication with Self-Help.

Secondly, although the late Ross McWhirter and I were at one time involved with the running of Self-Help (or the Current Affairs Press, as it was then known), that organisation had no part in the establishment of NAFF, and indeed, immediately after Mr McWhirter's death, his brother, Norris, and I dissociated ourselves from the new management which took over its affairs.

JOHN GOURIET

National Association for Freedom
11 Grape Street
London WC2

Reverse Discrimination

Sir, One point has not been raised in the correspondence about 'reverse discrimination'. This is the necessity, if members of some groups are to be given special advantages, of recording the membership of each group. With a system of 'reverse discrimination', sooner or later a marginal member of a group will wish to prove that he is entitled to the advantages offered, or to prove that he is not a member of a group which suffers from 'reverse discrimination'. So far this problem has not arisen in the United States, because there is an informal agreement about who is a member of a minority group, and because the battle has not been won for discrimination. When 'reverse discrimination' is well established, there are sure to be those who claim or disclaim membership of particular groups, and we can expect litigation on the question.

The courts, or the legislature, or both, will then have to provide definitions of who is black, who is a Chicano, who is a native Indian, etc. This might not prove difficult in the United States, where informal quotas for Jews, for example, have only recently been abandoned, and where native Indians are a special class. But is Britain ready for race classification?

In South Africa, an elaborate system of race classification has grown up to make possible discrimination against Africans, Coloureds, and Asiatics; and these laws would equally be needed to discriminate in their favour. The ultimate model is pre-war Germany, where the *Ahnenpass* and the Nuremberg laws, together with a national system of education in racial classification, made all discrimination efficient. The proponents of 'reverse discrimination' might pause if they realised that all official discrimination in favour or against members of particular groups requires group classification, including racial classification.

One of the most abhorrent features of life in South Africa is the moral degradation the whites accept through membership of a group which benefits by discrimination. We see clearly enough the moral evil of racial discrimination in South Africa and Nazi Germany. It is almost incredible that there are those who wish to introduce a similar system into Britain.

G. H. DURRANT

3994 West 34th Ave
Vancouver BC
Canada

Trahison des Clercs?

Sir, John Mortimer (London Diary, 16 December) wrestles with the liberal's dilemma – do we help or hinder the National Front by publicising them?

If these thugs were dwindling under the onslaught of revitalised communities, a universally effective education system and triumphant tolerance, or if the world had just lost 20 or 30 million people in a war or, even, if the old remembered why the war was fought and the young had been taught why it was fought, of course we wouldn't need to take much notice of these latter-day brownshirts. But none of these things is happening on a scale or at a pace which effectively combats either the resentments or the superstitions in which fascism is rooted and on which it thrives.

That means that people like John Mortimer must fight with the weapons that are readily to hand – their reputations, influence over opinion, wit, talent, shoe-leather, organisational activity *and* the realities of the past. Of course he isn't bewildered about *whether* he should fight, but *when*. Perhaps he can tell us. How many smashed meetings, terrorised immigrants, fun-loving yobbos, insulted Jews, recruited prison officers and votes must the neo-Nazi organisations enjoy before Mr Mortimer and others write to the Anti-Nazi League saying 'I think it's time we did something'?

NEIL KINNOCK

House of Commons
London SW1

Streaming Spires

Sir, Having recently returned from Oxford with my 18 year-old daughter, who has applied for admission to read Law at Hertford, I read with interest your article by Tim Albert and the subsequent letter by John Milner (NS 16 December).

Certainly I can testify to the pressure which the Oxford admission procedures impose on candidates and the anxiety with which candidates watch the post is well noted by Mr Albert. However, a number of points need to be made. The first is that the community needs centres of educational excellence, not primarily for the benefits of the recipients of that education, but because the community as a whole – including the poor and less advantaged – needs the leadership which our most agile brains can give when they are brought towards the fullness of their potential. Thus, while the

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presence among us of highly capable people, dedicated by academic discipline to the ferreting-out of truth, is an ornament to the people as a whole, it is also and will increasingly become, a matter of great necessity to us as the problems we face become more urgent and demanding.

Secondly, A-levels are not enough. Talking to my daughter about the two-and-a-half hours of interviews which she has experienced, as well as discussing with her the Oxford papers, there is no doubt in my mind that the system succeeds in searching out the candidate's capacity for logical thoughts, capacity to master unfamiliar material with rapidity, capacity to enter into rational discourse. No written examination can substitute for that and if the state schools do not provide suitable preparation for that type of test while the public schools do, then the answer is not to abolish the test but rather to remedy the defects in the state system. For the same reasons to limit by quota the number of entrants from any type of school is offensive to justice. The students who should be at Oxford are those who are best able to profit and contribute: if the social class composition of the entrants is not commensurate with the distribution of native ability in the population, something needs doing and needs doing urgently. But not by tinkering with the system of admissions in such a way that the more able are excluded in favour of the less able, irrespective of the causes of the actual disparity.

L. A. HOOSE

Kilne Court
Bridgwater
Somerset

Solid Figures

Sir, Philip and Alexander of Macedon were never, as Paul Johnson asserts (NS 23 and 30 December), 'shadowy shapes of antiquity' as Priam and Agamemnon were until recent discoveries added a historical dimension to Homer's poems. The finding of Philip's tomb is a happy and exciting accident, but it doesn't add substance to an already very substantial figure. And Alexander's staggering achievements were far too pervasive to have been ignored by history and turned into myth.

Moreover, it is unlikely, though not of course impossible, that Alexander's tomb will ever come to light. He was embalmed and his body lost in Alexandria where Julius Caesar saw it 300 years later and commented on its beauty and state of preservation. It seems to have disappeared when Alexandria was sacked about 400 years after that.

VALERIE HORSTER

18 New Row
London WC2

A Raspberry for Adler

Sir, Lordsakes, let *Maestrino* Adler skip the *cadenza*, forget his celebrated technique and get back to the subject which I cannot be alone in recalling was a letter (under a heading by the NS that incidentally two weeks running managed to misquote Buffon who in fact said '*le style est l'homme même*') complaining of Professor Richard Cobb's prose in a review of a book the writer had obviously not himself even superficially studied. Indeed it has become painfully evident that the whole theme is one well outside Adler's very limited *tessiture* and that in matters Franco-Algerian he doesn't know his *arpeggio* from his elbow, which is no doubt why he now so disingenuously pretends that his 'main purpose was the defence of Janet Flanner', whose Paris letters, like those from London of Mollie Panter-Dewney deserve, it has never been disputed, their place in any respectable anthology of *New Yorker* journalism. Hohner-artist Adler, whose own letters could more fittingly find place in the casebooks of his late namesake Alfred, so resonant are they with the counterpoint of compensation, must really not be permitted to project on to me his own chutzpah, or has he, in the process of assimilation into the Plantagenet peerage, simply forgotten his Yiddish? There is certainly neither cheek nor effrontery in stating that, while stage and screen performers are often its addicts, the great majority of dons I have come across prefer to read between hardcovers the works of the excellent American writers who contribute to the *New Yorker*, being fearful perhaps of the ordeal of having to cut their way with a *machete* through the jungle of conspicuous consumerism constituted by all those advertisements aimed at people who have everything save *joie-de-vivre*. It is a pity that the process of acculturation instituted by long London residence has not yet equipped Adler with the British musician's great gift of accurate sight-reading, or he might have noticed, I dare say, that I wrote not one single word that anyone could possibly construe as a 'put-down' of any of the writers listed by him.

The next time Milhaud's *harmoniciste* (would that he had even a *soupçon* of *feu* Milhaud's wit and charm) wants to blow a salivary strike let him instead take up staff and assemble his crotches and quavers for the composition of the *Morceau en forme de fromboise* for which his unthinking reed, or 'vibrating tongue' as the dictionary describes it, is the ideal solo instrument.

While I grieve to learn that you, Sir, are about to abandon the editorial chair on which you have left so undoubtedly warm an imprint, I hope that if your democratically elected *remplaçant* or *remplaçante* in it continues to print correspondence from musical muppets, priority will in future be given to that more universally popular member of the family, Sam Eagle.

ALASTAIR FORBES

1837 Chateau d'Oc
Switzerland

When is a Fix?

Sir, I was interested in Phillip Whitehead's article in your issue of 16 December. When I have been asked to appear on television or steam radio (rarely), I insist on appearing live – a system I gather our ambassadors in far away places are asked to request also.

When one appears live, the interviewer always goes through first the type of question he is likely to ask during the broadcast. This in my view helps to make the live discussion more fruitful and more to the point. Would this type of pre-interview interview be described by Phillip Whitehead as 'fixing TV programmes'?

JAMES ANDREWS

Geriatric Service
Hounslow Health District
Isleworth, Middlesex

Hungary in 1956

Sir, I am very sorry that George Mikes finds my letter on Hungary in 1956 'silly rubbish and factual distortion' (Letters 23 & 30 December). It is an opinion peculiar to Mr Mikes and not a statement of fact. In any case he ought not to turn my words. I did not take the Soviet Russian point of view, neither did I condone Soviet military intervention.

The letter by Mr Mikes gives expression to an irrational and implacable hatred which must be a matter for concern, especially if it is shared by others. For over 25 years the world has lived in the shadow of nuclear war, during which time a new generation has grown up. All the members of that generation everywhere, irrespective of race, colour or creed, have been deeply infected. Many are emotionally disturbed and some are very disturbed.

To reverse such an appalling state of affairs will yet call for a major effort in forbearance and understanding no less by the people of the Soviet Union than by the people of Britain. I believe with all my heart that any action that favours the beginnings of such an understanding is a step towards the banishment of the fear of nuclear mushroom clouds from our minds for ever and could foreshadow a new and better era for mankind.

ARTHUR NOBES

21 Queens Road
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk

Female Complaint

Sir, As a biographer of Sylvia Pankhurst and one who has spent the past several years studying the Pankhurst women, I wonder why the NEW STATESMAN appears to have become part of the anti-feminist backlash. I am aware that neither of the Webbs were especially interested in the suffrage movement, but they were honest intellectuals and would never have tolerated the 'cutsy' reviewing and writing of David Mitchell in their publication. Not only has David Mitchell's highly biased and absurd *Queen Christobel* been reviewed (25 November) by someone who obviously knows nothing about the subject, and has, therefore, been taken in, but David Mitchell himself seems to have been promoted to reviewer-in-chief of feminist books. Are there no serious women, or even men, who are studying feminism or the suffrage movement to whom your highly esteemed publication can turn to for reviews?

PATRICIA W. ROMERO

Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, USA

Encounter

'One of the few great beacons of English-language journalism . . . a model of how to present serious writing'

International Herald Tribune

In the January issue, just out: **George Urban,** in a long interview, discusses Euro-Communism with **Altiero Spinelli.** H. J. Eysenck asks *How Scientific is Freudianism?* Robert Craft on *Stravinsky and Eliot.* John Bossy on *Hans Küng's Theology.* Robert Heilbroner and Andrew Shonfield - *Can Capitalism Survive?* A story by Edward Candy. Jan Morris on *Barzini's America.* John Fuller on *Cookery Books.*

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Stephen Koss

The Duchess of Omnium

Lady Unknown: The Life of Angela Burdett-Coutts by EDNA HEALEY *Sidgwick & Jackson* £7.50

As a philanthropist, which was the role she cast herself in, Angela Burdett-Coutts preferred to be a 'Lady Unknown': that was a tribute to her altruism, which was redoubtable, and also, incidentally, a shield against unwelcome importuners. Among her contemporaries, though, she was anything but anonymous. Her eccentric behaviour, no less than her legendary wealth, saw to that. However awkwardly, she moved in the highest circles, constantly inviting gossip and ridicule. Like most Eminent Victorians, she strikes the modern reader as something of an oddity. All protestations to the contrary, Edna Healey's pious biography serves chiefly to reinforce that impression.

In 1837, two months after the young Victoria inherited her uncle's crown, Angela was the recipient of a legacy which, if converted into 'sovereigns, laid in a line, would stretch for over 24 miles'. Unlike Victoria's, her bequest was unanticipated. It had been amassed by her maternal grandfather, founder of the banking house that boasted George III among its celebrated clients. A model of rectitude in his financial transactions, Thomas Coutts 'went his own way' after banking hours. He contracted two improbable marriages, the first with one of his brother's servant-girls (Angela's grandmother), and the second with an actress (Sir Walter Scott's 'Dame of Diamonds'), who went on to marry the ninth Duke of St Albans, 'a fool and a booby' half her age. The Duchess, endowed with 'a warm and affectionate nature', retained a keen interest in her first husband's grandchildren. Dying childless, she left the Duke her horses and wine-cellar, including 47 bottles of champagne marked 'very bad', but settled her bounty on Angela, who was obliged only to add the name of Coutts to her own.

From her father, Sir Francis Burdett, whose Radical ardour had cooled over the years, the 'shy and sensitive girl' is said to have imbibed certain social principles, which she now had the resources to act upon. Without any degree of either precision or conviction, the case is put that Sir Francis, although a Tory MP, somehow contrived to remain 'humanitarian and progressive'. More legitimately, he receives credit for introducing his daughter to 'some of the greatest English scientists of the day', whose research she patronised, as well as to 'four young men, whose stars were as yet low on the horizon', but who became her 'friends for life': Louis Napoleon, Gladstone, Disraeli and Dickens.

The claim is more than a trifle exaggerated, at least in three of the four cases. Rumoured to have been among the suitors for her hand and dowry, Louis Napoleon was a glittering personality whom Angela admired mostly from afar. Disraeli portrayed her in two of his novels, but their early acquaintanceship failed to develop. Gladstone may have shared her religious interests and her concern for the plight of fallen women, but he was plainly annoyed by her meddling in ecclesiastical and political affairs. Angela's relationship with Dickens, 'the unpaid almoner in her charitable work', was a good deal more intimate and much the most fascinating part of the story. He dedicated *Martin Chuzzlewit* to her 'with the True and Earnest regard of the author', and she reciprocated by playing Esther Summerson in his turbulent domestic affairs. Mrs Healey identifies her as the prototype of Agnes Wickfield, 'always his good angel'.

But it was Trollope, whom Angela did not count among her friends, who best depicted her immediate world and the emotional predicament in which she soon found herself. Aside from her fortune and Mayfair address, however, she was no Madame Max in her romantic adventure with Wellington, a real-life Duke of Omnium. He gave her 'gentle solicitude', unheeded advice about the management of the bank, and counsel (usually conflicting with Dickens's) on her good works. The Iron Duke is revealed as a fetishist, offering Angela – who had only her blue stockings to protect her from the elements – a pair of galoshes like his own to keep her feet 'dry when you go out into the wet streets'. Repeatedly and at length he lectured her on the need to keep her feet warm in bed: 'If mine are very cold I rub them against each other at night as I have entreated you to do! I think of you when I am in the act of doing so . . .' Not surprisingly, as Mrs Healey describes it, 'the flattery of the great man's attention bowled her over'. Angela sent him 'the produce of her garden' and made 'a naïve and touching request' for 'seeds from his garden at Walmer Castle to be planted at Holly Lodge', her estate in Highgate. The author assures us that 'the symbolism escaped him'.

Forsaking metaphor, Angela boldly proposed marriage. She was then 33, and Wellington was 78. As her 'friend, Guardian, Protector', he gallantly refused, much to the relief of Dickens and the Queen alike. Thereafter the two of them remained friends, and he continued to advise on questions of chiropody; but his letters betrayed impatience, as when he declined to accompany her to Exeter Hall or rebuked her unjustly for turning on the doorstep of Apsley House 'like an ENFANT DE LA MAISON'. Mrs Healey, according the episode more serious consideration than it probably deserves, concludes that the 'values and attitudes' of Miss Coutts (as she had come to be known) and the Duke 'were totally different. Wellington was rooted in the 18th century, in Miss Coutts the seeds of the 20th century were already ripening'. In this instance, the symbolism seems to have escaped Mrs Healey.

Turning back to Dickens for inspiration, Angela stepped up her 'donations'. She dispensed vast sums for the rebuilding of slum areas, the planning and construction of artisan dwellings, and the introduction of sanitary improvements. She endowed various projects for education, Irish relief, missionary activity, and the building of churches at home and abroad. She sponsored schemes for assisted emigration, founded a 'Home for Homeless Women' (a necessary euphemism for someone who 'would never allow her box at Covent Garden to be filled for *La Traviata*'), and paid to ship an elaborate drying machine to the Crimea, where it was assembled for the benefit of the rain-soaked troops; it was a notable engineering feat and, Dickens thought, 'the only solitary "administrative" thing, connected with the war that has been a *success*!' Among other diverse causes to which she lent her name and support were the RSPCA and the National Goat Society.

In 1871, her 'remarkable services' were rewarded with a peerage, making her the first woman to be created a baroness in her own right. Gladstone, who had proposed her to the Queen, must have had second thoughts when the lady subsequently added to her honours the First Class and Star of the Order of the Medjidiyeh, conferred by the Sultan who perpetrated the 'Bulgarian Horrors'. Supposedly a Turcophile since the age of seven, when her mother had taken her to a performance of Rossini's *Il Turco in Italia*, the Baroness launched a campaign that raised £30,000 for a Turkish Compassionate Fund.

Esther Summerson came increasingly to resemble Mrs Jellyby. She played out her fantasies by bestowing her patronage on the farflung exploits of an array of imperial heroes, including Livingstone, Gordon, and Sir James Brooke, the White Rajah of Sarawak. As Victoria had her Mr Brown, Angela had her Mrs Brown, her former governess on whom she leaned heavily. The death of her companion in 1877 left her shaken and lonely. Two years later, as much for the edification of Henry Irving (who was preparing a new production of *Othello*) as for the sake of her own health, she chartered a yacht and embarked on a Mediterranean cruise. Among those on board was William Ashmead Bartlett, 'an obscure young American, half her age', who served as her secretary.

The elderly Baroness returned home with a fixed determination to marry her youthful companion, and neither the Queen's objections nor allegations about Bartlett's moral conduct could dissuade her. 'Instinctive feelings', she remonstrated in a decidedly un-Victorian manner, were 'a more reliable guide than the sense of duty'. Gladstone knew better than to involve himself. 'Next to Afghanistan,' Disraeli wrote to Victoria, 'I think the greatest scrape is Lady Burdett's marriage', and he deplored how 'the

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element of the ridiculous has now so deeply entered into her career . . .' Mrs Healey sees things differently:

> The Baroness was approaching her 68th year but in the dim light of the church the slender figure in white velvet, veiled in delicate old lace, was a snow maiden, ageless and immaculate.

The light, one suspects, must have been very dim indeed.

William Ashmead Bartlett-Burdett-Coutts became Conservative MP for Westminster, as Sir Francis Burdett had been, and mourned his wife when she eventually died in 1906. More amused than scandalised by the incongruity of this marital union, some young Liberal politicians bantered that, in the middle of one night, the many-hyphenated husband of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts awoke from a nightmare in a cold sweat; he had dreamt that old age was creeping up on him and, when he switched on the light, by God it was!

This anecdote does not appear in Mrs Healey's pages, where it would be out of keeping. Her book exudes Victorianism, with a prose style that shades from pale violet to deep purple. And yet Edna Healey is not sufficiently familiar with the period to distinguish between W. T. Stead and Wickham Steed. One could have done with fewer illustrations and a more sustained analysis of Victorian philanthropy, its aims and limitations. Mrs Healey does not acknowledge such complexities, let alone address herself to them, with the result that her own aspirations emerge more clearly than those of her subject, who stubbornly remains a 'Lady Unknown'.

Michael Mason

Feeding the Cornshucker

Selected Letters of William Faulkner edited by Joseph Blotner *Scolar Press* £10

Somebody once said 'Puccini is the Wagner of music'. Whoever he was, he no doubt said it several more times after that, and he may have toyed with variations on his epigram. The NS could run a competition in which new values had to be substituted for the variables 'x', 'y' and 'z' in the formula: 'x is the y of z' – with the sole constraint that 'x' and 'y' must denote persons active in the same field, namely, that denoted by 'z'. I imagine William Faulkner would appear several times as an 'x' or a 'y' in the answers to this competition. 'William Faulkner is the John Steinbeck of literature'; 'D. H. Lawrence (or Joseph Conrad) is the William Faulkner of literature'; and so on.

In other words there are still worries concerning Faulkner (admittedly less readily felt in America than in Britain), even though he had the distinction in the last seven-odd years of his life of being the subject of more articles, books and theses than any other living writer. The worries about Faulkner come down to worries about wholeness: about wholeness in the works, and wholeness in the man – which includes wholeness as between the citizen and the artist. Professor Blotner, who has edited these *Selected Letters*, first met Faulkner when the latter was a writer in residence at the University of Virginia, and Faulkner greeted him by saying 'Morning Gin'ral' (Faulkner's Southern accent being represented by Blotner in his biography with fewer apostrophes than some other writers have used). The two words expressed much of the unease of Faulkner's nature. He was wary and uncomfortable about his academically ratified role as a writer and jokingly ignored it – to take refuge in a common area outside literature (Blotner had been in the RAF) which was itself a little mockingly treated. Whether there was also a joke here on Faulkner's own Southern ways it is not possible to tell, but Faulkner did ape Southern-ness on occasion.

Faulkner adopted several disguises during his life. The little fraudulences about the RAF are well-known, and emerged quite early on. It was not possible to maintain such a publicly checkable yarn as that of having seen active service in the RAF (and received wounds in leg and head) once he had become a famous man. But the myths about rum-running across the Caribbean during Prohibition and about writing *As I Lay Dying* while shovelling coal in a powerhouse (his job there was not a manual one at all) Faulkner continued to propagate. About another conspicuous matter, his surname, he was perpetually baffling. Christened 'Falkner', he generally called himself 'Faulkner' after 1918, a form he sometimes said was that of his greatgrandfather's name but, on other occasions, that of his parents. Perhaps most tellingly, he reverted to 'Falkner' for entries in the ledger of his transactions at his plantation in 1941.

This was a man very divided in himself, and probably a man who experienced great wretchedness. Professor Blotner's 1974 biography was not revealing in a way commensurate with its bulk (over 1,800 pages) because it was premature. The areas of misery in Faulkner's life – of which his marriage may have been one – simply had to be treated with reticence (though there were rewards in the great mass of anecdote accumulated in the book, sometimes tenuously connected with Faulkner but often startling and vivid – like the tale of brother Jack's tracking down of Dillinger). These considerations also control the selection of letters in the new volume and it includes little, if anything, not already transcribed in the biography.

Faulkner himself professed to hate the idea of his personality and private life being exposed, which is probably another reason why Professor Blotner, a friend of Faulkner and of his family, has been selective. In his preface he compares some of the unpublished letters to those of Joyce – meaning, I take it, the letters to Nora recently printed by Richard Ellmann. It is true that Joyce wished these letters destroyed, but if they are read not simply for their obscenity (and perhaps no reader, however high-minded, can fail to have this kind of interest in them, at least first time round) they reveal themselves as a kind of personal 'publication', akin to and probably necessary for the uttering of many things in *Ulysses*.

It was not, anyway, a true picture of himself that Joyce wished to bring forward alongside his art, but rather a sense of an agent, the 'artist', consistent and continuous with the work. This sense of integrity between a man and his writing can coexist with personal reticence – and in fact can include it, as it does with Samuel Beckett. The creation of an accompanying artistic personality, so conspicuous (and often tactically necessary) a feature of 20th-century arts and letters, was something that Faulkner eschewed. His reiterated slogan was 'I am a writer, not a man of letters'. He was taciturn in literary circles, wary and defensive as in the meeting with Blotner. The reader will seek almost in vain for statements about his art in these *Selected Letters* (incidentally, the greatest number occur in letters to Malcolm Cowley, and *The Faulkner-Cowley File* of 1966 has already covered this ground).

It is natural to feel exasperated by this posture. Faulkner's are among the strangest novels of the century, but what does the

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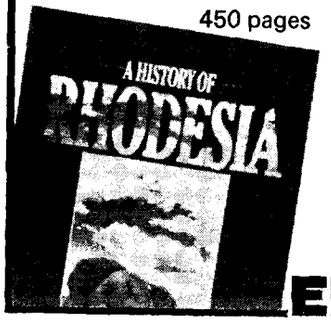

EM EYRE METHUEN

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tantalised reader get in the way of an explanation of their quality from the author? 'You just keep the words coming . . . Everything comes; the people, the place, the story, and yo' just act like the fellow feeding the cornshucker'. In fact, despite the typically disingenuous evasion, this image says something important about Faulkner's technique. He did have an hallucinatory, mediumistic imagination – like his own Quentin Compson and Gail Hightower – which permitted an 'automatic' writing, as automatic as the action of a cornshucker. Another dislocation in Faulkner is that this Dickensian quality of imagination is most congenial for comedy, but in his hands was usually a glittering ornament on material that is tragic or melodramatic.

But why the obliqueness and elaboration in 'feeding the cornshucker'? Why is a clear narration of Thomas Sutpen's story withheld until Chapter 7 of *Absalom, Absalom!*, and so forth? Here it is tempting to see the Faulknerian wariness at work again, prompting a nervous flight from the pedestrian. There is admittedly an element of canniness in the uncanniness of Faulkner – witness the erudite diction that often obscures the plain scent laid by the colloquial. What he increasingly dignified in later life as his 'courage for rhetoric' (usually in self-flattering contrast to Hemingway) did have something about it of energetic cowardice.

Nevertheless the difficulties of Faulkner's best novels are deeply and impressively of a piece with their author. *The Sound and the Fury*, for example, yields a peculiar bleakness in the reading, an anguish that only the struggle, the sense of thwarted homing, of the technique could have produced. Edwin Muir said that Faulkner's method was one of 'circular wanderings' because there was something 'blind . . . in his vision of the world', an 'impenetrable darkness'. For Malcolm Cowley the figurative route was around 'a city buried in the jungle . . . about to be overwhelmed by fire or earthquake'. Another formula of Cowley's (to which Faulkner assented) – 'oratory out of solitude' – can probably sustain a metaphysical reading of the word 'solitude' as well as a cultural one. Faulkner would speak of 'listening to the voices' as he wrote fiction, in the easy way he spoke of feeding the cornshucker. But elsewhere he wrote about 'the curse of human speech'.

So the epigram 'D. H. Lawrence is the Faulkner of literature' would have no point. The grounds of the double insult would need to be different in each case, despite the obvious similarities of material and linguistic surface between the authors. Indeed the jibe against the American writer starts to dissipate, and disable itself. The sense of dogmatic personality that is so notoriously objectionable in Lawrence has the effect of making the spate of 'people . . . place . . . story' an intelligible, if irritatingly intelligible, thing. But the absence of personality in Faulkner's fiction is disturbing in an altogether more interesting way. There is also a spate of materials. They are seen with eidetic clarity, assiduously dwelt on, and shuffled into striking and inventive arrangements. But it is all done with a strange lack of partisanship, heartlessly, as it were, and in a void. Those trying to yoke Faulkner and other novelists in epigrams would be on safer ground with Joseph Conrad.

Among this week's contributors:

STEPHEN KOSS's *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics* was published in 1975; he teaches in the History Department at Columbia University, New York.

MICHAEL MASON teaches English at University College, London. He is currently working on a novel.

R. W. JOHNSON is the author of *How Long Will South Africa Survive?* (Macmillan).

TIMOTHY MO boxed amateur for the St Pancras Club. His first novel, *The Monkey King*, will be published by Deutsch next year.

Christopher Reid

The Ear Speaks

Paul Valéry: An Anthology selected, with an introduction, by James R. Lawler *Routledge* £6.95 and £3.50

Stravinsky, who seems to have been as acute a friend and critic as one could hope for, summarised Valéry's achievement – or lack of one – in these words: 'he worshipped intellect too much . . . The result of this Teste-ism was his contentment with *epistamenos*, with "knowing how", at which point he would stop.' Edmund Wilson, sceptical of the Valéry cult, which had Eliot, Stevens and Auden for high priests and big wheels, would have endorsed the quotes around 'knowing how'. For him, Valéry was a talented dabbler, whose reputation for a wide and profound learning was based on his own, unexaminable say-so. The high claims that admirers make for the philosophical writings did not impress Wilson, who found them thin on ideas but thick on snobbery and intellectual pretension.

One can see the problem: Valéry's fame as a poet rests on what looks like a very slender output; on the other hand, the prose is plentiful and bulks out Jackson Mathews's English-language edition of the works to a good 15 volumes. It must be hard for the fully-committed Valéryste not to oversell these secondary pieces, especially when the master, always his own best publicity-agent, gives one his encouragement to do so.

'Each sentence', he wrote, 'is an act so complex that I doubt whether anyone has yet been able to provide a tolerable description of it.' Writing about Leonardo, he tells us: 'although there are very few authors with the courage to say how their work took shape, I believe there are not many more who venture to understand it.' The word 'courage' gives us a clue. It is this myth of Valéry as a kind of hero or reclusive saint of the intellect, who practised outlandish austerities in his pursuit of an understanding of the mind – i.e. he got up early every morning to cerebrate in peace – that colours our picture of him. We are amazed, in view of the hazards he keeps reminding us of, that he ever completed a work. He tells us that it is courageous in an author to investigate the processes of creation, and we are only too ready to take his word for it. But how far should one accept the rhetoric?

Paul Valéry: an Anthology gives us James R. Lawler's orthodox selection from the Mathews canon. It contains parallel texts of some of the best poetry – if 'parallel' is the right word for a translation that renders, 'Ce délice à demi futur,/C'est l'éternité fondante, Eve!' as, 'That just-about-to-be delight/Is melt-in-the-mouth eternity, Eve!' It collects together a number of essays on artistic and intellectual subjects: fragments of the fragmentary novel, *Monsieur Teste*, and, finally, two of his philosophical dialogues. These last present a curious case: modelled on Plato and peopled with classical or pastoral types, they utterly lack the energy of their Socratic ancestors. The maieutic method is far beyond Valéry's grasp and there is no sense here of the development or deepening of an argument. Instead we have the exchange of frozen epigrams and polite raptures – the sort of things that Grecian urns might say to each other in a Debating Society for Art Objects. When, at the end of the 'Dialogue of the Tree', Lucretius says, 'Radiant meditation fills me with rapture . . . And in my soul I feel all words atremble,' and Tityrus replies, 'I leave you in that admirable state. But now I must gather my flock again,' one cannot help wondering how the sheep ever got into the seminar-room.

Valéry's mode of thought was never suited to dialectical development. Even his best essays feel like strings of *obiter dicta* – fancy necklaces at best. He was an aloof and lonely thinker, with a cast of mind that Edmund Wilson categorised as snobbish – though this epithet seems to me mistaken, since snobbery implies an appeal to socially contrived standards of taste and value, whereas Valéry was a subversive, who made and remade his own rules. As he researched into the nature of the human mind – his mind – nothing became more certain than its essential loneliness. In the middle of his great poem, *Le Cimetière Marin*, we read:

> Midi là-haut, Midi sans mouvement,
> En soi se pense et convient à soi-même . . .
> Tête complète et parfait diadème,
> Je suis en toi le secret changement –

an heroic statement that perfectly reveals the egocentric who is determined not to be ego-circumscribed.

'A lyric poem', Valéry wrote, 'is the unfolding of an exclamation.' Nothing tells us more about the true nature of his literary gift. His best poems are either outbursts in monologue form or apostrophes to unresponsive objects (a pomegranate, the sea, a sleeping girl, etc.). Exclamation-marks are a frequent device: indeed one could almost build another colonnade out of those to be found in his *Cantique des colonnes*, supposedly an ecstatic outburst *by* such normally unresponsive beings.

Monsieur Teste, a truly self-defeating piece of fiction, begins boldly enough in novel form, but then disintegrates into jottings, before it peters out entirely. This

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tendency towards the fragmentary and the inchoate seems to lie at the heart of Valéry's work and it is to the shame of Mr Lawler's anthology that he has failed to include any of the notebook material. Much of this can be located in *Analects*, Vol. 14 of the Mathews edition, and is a direct record of those famous early-morning cold baths of the mind. Some of what he recorded was trivial and banal, but a great deal is vivid, surprising and revelatory, especially when he touches on literature and its creation. His technical remarks – that rhyme is like a clock outside the poem, for example; or that 'in the poet: /The ear speaks,/The mouth listens' – must impress even the practitioner who disagrees with him.

But, most important, these notebooks dramatise the central problem of Valéry's intellectual life, the state of a mind as it confronts chaos. Sternly independent, he distrusted the systems that would have enabled him to build on a scale larger than the unfolding of an exclamation. If Valéry emerges as a hero from my account of him, it is not because he worked perfection out of chaos, for he did this less often than he and his admirers supposed. His real achievement – if not an artistic one – was to invite the chaos into his work. The exclusion of such material from Mr Lawler's anthology seems pious and timid.

R. W. Johnson

His Capitals

The Communist Challenge to Africa by IAN GREIG with a foreword by Lord Chalfont *Foreign Affairs Publishing Company* £3

This book is interesting in more ways than it intends. Ian Greig, the deputy-director of the Foreign Affairs Research Institute (Whitehall), is a seasoned cold warrior whose life has been devoted to the 'study of Communist strategy, political warfare, subversion and terrorism'. Mr Greig is very much against all these things. He is also very much against – it soon emerges – all African radical governments, all African 'liberation movements' (the inverted commas are his), the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the Movement for Colonial Freedom and the World Council of Churches. Etcetera. His substantial and lavishly produced book is published by a company belonging to the ex-Tory MP (and Greig's fellow Monday Clubber), Geoffrey Stewart-Smith, who, judging from the book's price, clearly knows things other publishers don't. Intrigued, I rang the publisher and asked how one could bring out a hardcover book in these days for £3. Well, I was told, it was a strictly commercial operation but, yes, the book was probably underpriced – perhaps it should have been £4. I rang another publisher who hooted with laughter and insisted that a break-even price could not be lower than £8. Either there was a hidden subsidy of 100 per cent plus, he suggested, or the book would have to be bulk-bought and distributed virtually free by some embassy or propaganda service.

A further note of interest is lent by Lord Chalfont's foreword, which suggests an even harder line than Greig's in the struggle to 'stem the advancing tide of International Communism' (his capitals). Flipping through the FAPC catalogue one notes, too, that Lord Chalfont has fallen rather into the habit of endorsing FAPC books with forewords. It is true, of course, that Lord Chalfont belongs to the distinctly curious band of those ennobled by Harold Wilson, but involvement of an ex-Labour minister with a mysteriously backed operation of the far Right is, perhaps, a case of eccentricity taken a little far.

With all of that said, Mr Greig has done his job rather well, culling nuggets of information from a wide variety of sources to expound and illustrate his theme. His book is a compendium of information about the expansion of Soviet naval power in the Indian Ocean, the history of Soviet technical and military assistance to African governments and guerrilla movements, the developing Cuban and Chinese interest in the continent, and the activities of communist espionage and intelligence services there.

Now, it would be possible to make fun of Mr Greig by focusing on some of his more alarmist and questionable remarks or by pointing out that his emphasis on the importance of Podgorny's African tour or of Soviet missile-storage facilities at Berbera seem funny now that the Russians have kicked Podgorny out and the Somalis have kicked the Russians out. This would be unfair, however. Mr Greig is often right. The Russians *are* more influential than formerly in Africa: they *are* stronger in the Indian Ocean; there is at least *some* communist influence among the liberation movements; doubtless, their intelligence services *do* operate in Africa; communist influence *is* strong in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. There are, of course, reds – as well as Monday Clubbers – under the bed.

It is, though, more important to point out that there is not yet a single communist state in Africa, nor even a single state as infeodated to the Russians as, say, Senegal is to the French. Even where Russian penetration has been deepest, they have repeatedly lost their hold. And when asked to go – by the Guineans, the Egyptians, or the Somalis – they go. What would be the response of the French, one might ask (jocularly), to being asked to quit Senegal? They still have troops there; and in Chad; and in Zaire. But we have yet to see a Russian soldier in black Africa. Moreover, it would be difficult to find even two or three Soviet client-states among the OAU's 47 members against 30-odd Western clients.

It is the same story with naval power. The Russians showed little interest in the Indian Ocean until Kennedy began to deploy Polaris submarines there with long-range missiles targeted on Russia. This left the USSR with no real alternative but to move outwards into that Ocean for purely defensive reasons. Even so she still has no real African base for her ships and her navy is dwarfed in the region by that of the US alone, leaving aside the British, French and South Africans.

But the imbalance goes deeper than that. The West has, historically and still actually, an overwhelming predominance in Africa. While it could get away with it, the West not merely penetrated Africa but enslaved its people and took it over wholesale. It still dominates the continent politically and militarily and owns many of its major resources. Those who huff and puff over the 'Communist penetration of Africa' look back implicitly, bitterly, and arrogantly to this period of total Western monopoly. Lord Chalfont, in his foreword, tells us more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger that he feels he is on the losing side in all this. For anyone concerned for Africa the only response can be to pray that he is right.

Robert Conquest

The Day We Played Mars

The Exploits of Engelbrecht by MAURICE RICHARDSON *John Conquest* £1.50

In the 27 years since *The Exploits of Engelbrecht* was first published, it has had a following of devotees, an Invisible College which might be thought to make it one of those 'underground' cult books which are such a mark of our time. Unfortunately – and for Mr Richardson's bank account above all – this cannot be taken in the sense often applied to such work as Tolkien's or Vonnegut's. Richardson fans can certainly claim greater discrimination, finer souls and so forth, than such mass-movement rivals. But the book suffers from two other handicaps from this point of view: a radical humour and a wide-ranging intelligence. Anyone who missed its first appearance, or has grown up in the meantime and who does not mind such qualities, should now pester the bookshops for copy after copy (the first is bound to be stolen).

Richardson is soaked in what seems to be the modern Myth. It appears, in one sense, to be very dated: to be the Myth of the Fifties. But it is surprising how little has changed. Yes, Virginia, we had surrealism and science fiction right back then (in the Thirties, too, come to that). At any rate the tone could be defined as cybernetic surrealist-gothic – not that that exhausts its meld.

For example, in the section called 'A Quiet Game of Chess', we have the conventions of the Western Desert. In 'The Day We Played Mars' (where the players have been arriving at the Lunar ground in 'everything from ordinary space-ships to beams, dreams, mediums and telepathic wave-patterns', and the hero and his intimates have been training so strictly on mescaline that 'by the time we arrive . . . it's a job to sort us out from our hallucinations') Marx and Engels are scrum- and fly-half respectively of a team consisting of the entire human race, alive or dead. Earth loses at first, with the inevitable con-

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sequences; but when the tide turns, the sentences of one in ten of the doomed wing-forwards are commuted to Life in the Scrum. The day, as usual, is somewhat illicitly saved by Engelbrecht, who at a 'little private ceremony in the Changing Room, attended by Charlie Marx, Arnold of Rugby and the Politbureau of the Selection Committee', is awarded the game's highest honour, the Crypto-cap.

But this is Marx's one appearance. More typical is Salvador Dali (full-back), who turns up quite often. Just the same, and this is a tribute to Richardson's inventiveness, the 'real' characters like Dali, W. G. Grace, Lady Godiva, Jack the Ripper are not overdone, and the invented individuals like The Oldest Member, Lizard Bayliss, The Id, Dreary Dan, Tommy Prenderghast and Lamia Lobb (whose health is gallantly drunk in formalin from her surgical boot) are far more vivid. As is, above all, Engelbrecht himself, game to the point of foolhardiness He is 'a dwarf, like nearly all surrealist boxers, who do most of their fighting with clocks'.

The apparently disparate elements of Mr Richardson's (and your and my) culture have been brought together at just the right level, in a series of racy accounts of various sporting and theatrical events. A kind of suspension of disbelief is thus achieved – though I don't exactly mean that anyone will quite credit the Dogs' Opera, with the baying of 'Here's to the Basset of bashful fifteen', or the long aria *All This to Thee I Promise* about the allure of a smart dog's life in a gunroom de luxe and his photograph in the *Catler* and the *Bitch* . . .

There is only one boxing match proper, Engelbrecht against the Grandfather Clock, 'ten feet of black bog-oak and brass, coffin-lead and hangman's rope', which the hero barely wins. He goes through The Night of the Big Witch Shoot, through Golf and Angling, Man-hunt and Wrestling, Elopement and Elections, even Chess played over a vast area with pieces like the Flamethrower and the Atomic Bomb. The drawings, by James Boswell (where Engelbrecht in particular is beautifully conceived), are the most brilliant thing of their sort I have ever seen, precisely fitting the text and perfectly using the artists suited to the myth – Doré, Fuseli ('original destroyed by gamma rays'), Tenniel, Blake, Bosch . . . the last named in an illustration of angling. 'A dark mist hung over the canal. The vampire bats were out in swarms. The bot-fly danced in virid clouds. You could hardly have had a better surrealist fishing day' – but a great deal of effort naturally goes into repulsing Things which emerge: 'several of our best anglers had either been dragged under . . . or were raving in the schizophrenic ward', the chaplain having been lost 'in a plucky exorcism ceremony'. But Engelbrecht again prevails, through sheer recklessness – in spite of a typical tyro's attempt to use a flashy but ineffective lure known as the Barnet By-pass, 'a beautifully made facsimile of a suburban housewife with a lot of brightly coloured feathers in her hair', until dissuaded by more experienced anglers in favour of the 'College Chaplin'.

The plucky, cocky little fellow is up to any hobbit (and I do not write as an anti-hobbit fanatic). Surely some film-man will take him up? How easy it is to envisage even the less dramatic scenes. For example, the end of the golf story, 'Round the World in One':

> The celebrations lasted far into the century. My last recollection is of little Engelbrecht taking a header into the loving cup of flaming rum punch. 'Come on in', he said, as he swam round and round, 'it's gloriously warm.'

It is an excellent book and a very funny one: as dated as a good port, as fresh as a daisy; Homo Ludens at his most intelligent, Homo Faber at his most entertaining.

Derek Mahon

Anthony Borges

Afterjoyce: Studies in Fiction after 'Ulysses'
by ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS *Oxford* £4.95

It is an interesting fact that, despite their ubiquitous and enduring presence, the great innovators of the modernist movement have exercised little direct influence on the work of later writers. The ghost of Hardy is visible everywhere in modern English poetry; that of Eliot, transparent at best. Joyce, it is said, blew the whistle on the traditional novel of manners and morals; yet it is with us still in one form or another. Is this a comment on the essential eccentricity of Eliot and Joyce, or a comment on the artistic backwardness of English writers? The latter, Professor Adams implies, while acknowledging that, as regards the mythic structure of *Finnegans Wake* for example,

> . . . Joyce may have cut short further experiment in this area; by doing the novel of the collective unconscious *par excellence* he pre-empted the fields of a dozen pioneers, and reduced them, as an alternative to being minor followers, to doing something else altogether.

But how many pioneers would there have been if Joyce had made only occasional use of the collective unconscious? One may perhaps get some sort of answer by considering the history of the 'stream of consciousness' from Joyce to the present day. On this showing, not many.

Professor Adams looks at the Joycean influence on some two dozen writers, by no means all of them writers in English. There are lengthy discussions of the Italian Gadda and the German Broch, but the principal exhibits are Virginia Woolf, Faulkner, Beckett and Nabokov, with a brief survey of more recent figures like Burgess, Updike, Pynchon, O'Brien and Borges – 'my Argentinian namesake', as Burgess once referred to him. Curiously, there is nothing about Céline, whose *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit* surely owes a great deal to the demotic side of *Ulysses;* or about Lowry, whose use of Joycean techniques in *Under the Volcano* is both obvious and successful.

Of course, we are all afterjoyce whether we like it or not. But it seems to be so difficult, even now, for so many novelists to come to terms with Joyce's achievement, much less his personality, that only in quite a small minority of cases (though those often the most interesting) can his influence be traced. In Woolf (*Mrs Dalloway*) and Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury*) there is the stream-of-consciousness. Professor Adams remarks on the curious fact that this device, which Joyce did not invent but which he made popular, was almost immediately applied by others to cases of abnormal psychology. In Beckett there is the visionary dimension and the obsession with finality. (Zeno's paradox has a special application here, suggests Professor Adams: 'If the last word can be said, somebody must exist to say it, about whom at least one further thing can be said.') In Nabokov there is the compulsive games-playing; in Burgess the semantic inventiveness; in Updike the mythological background; in Pynchon the panoptic vision; in O'Brien the satirical precision; in Borges the dream-logic.

The list is not exhaustive, and it doesn't need to be; for the influence of Joyce is a pervasive, shifting thing, as much evidenced by a willingness to experiment with forms as by the form of an experiment itself. 'Those who adopted some elements of Joyce's labyrinthine, mosaic style of construction hardly ever worked to his scale; those who worked to his scale generally relied more than he did on the impetus of narrative.' Yet 'the novel' has never been the same since. Many individual novelists have written as if Joyce never existed; but it must be obvious by now that, in comparison with those who have attempted something like the Joycean enterprise, such novelists are fighting a rearguard action.

Professor Adams, like Hugh Kenner, belongs to the Yeats-meets-Pound, Eliot-meets-Joyce school of modernist historiography (he also makes frequent use of neologisms like 'exoskeletal' and 'topos', but don't let that put you off); so it's natural for him to speak of a 'Joyce Era' while recognising that it might equally well be called the Picasso Era or the Einstein Era. In any case, he has, for a critic, the unusual perspicacity to see that it isn't the literature that matters, but something for which the literature is merely the score:

> The current phrase 'post-modern' signifies plainly that we are still forced to define ourselves in relation to the old impulse, even though we know it's no longer ours . . . When the new age comes along, if it's really going to be new, it will no doubt announce itself as decisively as *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* announced the advent of that cycle whose brass and iron ages we are . . . now experiencing.

This English

Early in the new year we hope to start an occasional companion column to This England, under the present heading. The column will be a watchdog on wrong, bad or simply very inelegant English in our newspapers and journals, with the emphasis on 'wrong'. Entries should, therefore, not overlap with Pseuds' Corner, Situations Corner, funny misprints, etc. The usual prizes will be awarded for entries.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Timothy Mo

Magazines: Kung Phew

My first contact with Chinese boxing must have been, as I recall, in about 1955-56, well before the art was exported in commercial form to the Occident. As a treat my *amahs* had taken me down to the South China Athletic Association in Hong Kong's Happy Valley. A boxing instructor from the tough dockside area of Shaukiwan was going to give a display on a dusty track behind the race-course. The climax of the demonstration was going to feature the *sifu* adopting a low horse-stance in front of a small car (probably one of the colony's ubiquitous Morris Minors) and preventing it from moving forwards while a senior student revved the motor through a low gear. The master screwed his feet into the ground, summoned up the *chi* or internal energy from its source below the navel, and signalled he was ready. Without difficulty, in fact without any perceptible impediment at all, the car leapt rather than rolled smoothly forwards over the master and, snagged on the fender, he was dragged a few yards forwards before his startled disciples could disentangle him. It is an image which has affected my outlook on Oriental martial arts ever since.

Quite a bit has changed since those days. Kung Fu, loosely meaning Chinese boxing, has never established itself in the West on a large scale, but the Japanese arts of judo and karate are now big business: yet another captured market. There was a major boom during 1973-75, due largely to the Bruce Lee films and their Hong Kong imitators, of which the Japanese arts were – ironically – the major beneficiaries: those who couldn't find Kung Fu classes took karate courses.

But the boom, at least in this country, never generated much of a literature. The two main British publications *Karate and Oriental Arts* (established 1966 by a schoolteacher) and *Fighting Arts* (published out of Liverpool) pre-dated the exploitation period. They were excellent minority magazines, amateur publications in the best sense of the word, written and produced by enthusiasts for the enthusiastic. Under such circumstances it was relatively unimportant if the page designs often seemed to be arranged on the principle of a strategic dispersal of resources or if misprints sometimes got through. It could safely be assumed that readers would be interested enough to negotiate some obstacle-course lay-outs and get to the end. Some of the articles in *Fighting Arts* ('The Magazine for the Serious Martial Artist') have been as good as anything that has ever been written on unarmed combat. I remember the fascination with which I read an interview with Ray Edler, a US marine who became middleweight kick-boxing champion of Japan, a business heavily infiltrated by Tokyo gangsters. Edler used to win by punching, a dastardly gambit which was compared by one Japanese acquaintance of mine to the use of atomic weapons in 1945.

The arrival of a glossy, colour-illustrated newcomer in *Combat* forced, one suspects, the two older mags to think hard about their formats, *KOA* recently giving itself a shiny cover. This was a pity; there had been something very endearing about the old look. At least the serious magazines had nothing to fear from the fold-up sheets, often reversing to give action posters of Lee or other film-stars, which appealed to another end of the market altogether. The older publications have always appealed to the participant.

You have to be almost fanatical, though, to try the Hong Kong-published magazines and booklets. These are often not too well translated from the Chinese and expound such mysteries as the internal rotated adduction stance (pigeon-toed, knock-kneed, both hands stuck in front: in short just asking for someone to knock you over). Unwary Occidentals might have found some of the strip illustrations of combat moves baffling; though translated as to text, the frames began from the back of the book and progressed frontwards, Chinese-style.

Chinese-style, too, is the slavish deference shown to teachers, some of whom (not necessarily the most modest) look in need of a good work-out. Even the best British mags tend to be a bit obsequious. Oriental martial arts are pretty hidebound. Strict 'discipline' and hierarchy operate in most establishments. Drills emphasise the group rather than the individual, with learning by rote and habit. It is, therefore, cheering to note that international-style boxers, using only their fists, have rapidly trounced karate and Kung Fu stylists almost every time they have clashed in America. Exponents of *muai Thai*, trained in a similar way to international boxers, and practitioners of the graceful, deeply Gallic kicking and punching art of *la boxe française* have also proved the value of tough, individualised training routines.

On the whole karate and Kung Fu are not effective fighting methods, unless you are very, very good. Hunter S. Thompson had it right when he remarked that he fancied a scar-knuckled bar-room brawler to beat a black belt product of the California studios every time. One of the main tactical weaknesses of the Chinese, Japanese and Korean systems, to my mind, is the absence of a left hook to head or body thrown from an orthodox stance. A whole fighting philosophy can be predicated round this most subtle and deadly of counter-punches, delivered with the front hand. It arrives fast because it has less distance to traverse than the back hand; has nasty repercussions because it is difficult to see coming; and is also a 'safe' blow because it leaves most openings blocked. Because of this, it is the blow that, classically, ends a series of punches.

Oriental combinations lack the subtlety of international boxing, where light blows may be thrown to get leverage or make openings for a knockout punch six shots away. Often a series of light blows to the head has a dazing, distancing effect on the recipient. A hard follow-up may just bring a groggy opponent back to the real world. But the same blow in the body would terminate matters. These are items of lore largely unsensed in classical Kung Fu – perhaps because none of the proponents were used to being hit for real, hard and repeatedly.

As far as street fighting goes, all the poetic nomenclature and style of Kung Fu can be reduced to poking the eyes and kicking the shins and groin, in that order of selection (*very* difficult to kick someone between the legs if they are prepared). Golden Rooster Standing On One Leg, a form from the balletic art of Tai Chi Chuan, means kicking someone in the testicles and gouging him in the eyes simultaneously.

As might be expected, the American mags get right down to the nitty-gritty. *Black Belt* and the newer *Inside Kung Fu* are fairly tradition-minded, most like their British counterparts. But in an atavistic way I can almost respect the honest brutality of *Official Karate*:

> Another surprised yell was heard as the bouncer shot out a side snap kick which blasted into another's knee-cap, causing him to crumple, whimpering softly. The bouncer faced the remaining foe who had managed to block a reverse punch to the face, but not the front-kick/snap punch combination that hit him in the gut, doubling him up and thus preparing him for the *coup de grace*, a *shuto* to the back of the neck.

Redundantly, it continues: 'He collapsed into an unconscious heap.' That there is a market for this kind of stuff is really quite worrying – but at least it doesn't make fighting out to be the path to enlightenment.

Television

Russell Davies

Olde Rope

And did you see Ron Moody plain? Did he do Fagin *yet again*? You did, he did. We all have a lot to put up with at Christmas. A lot, for instance, of Mike Windgren, Danny Fisher, Tulsa McCauley, Vince Everett, Chad Gates, Josh Morgan, Jodie Tatum, Mike Edwards, Joe Lightcloud, Dr John Carpenter, Rick Richards, Ross Carpenter and Charlie Rogers. These were the variously put-upon heroes that Elvis Presley played, throughout the holiday on BBC-1. Bedraped with girls and dunked in a cosmetic glaze – there was even a glaze on his hair-glue – the lamented popster came over,

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morning after morning, as too bored to be ill-at-ease. There is something pervasively seedy about all these films, especially the Deep South ones that semi-explicitly document the kind of life Elvis might have been expected to lead if he hadn't made records.

But if Elvis was best avoided, what can one say of *Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas* (ATV), much less *Perry Como's Olde Englishe* equivalent on BBC-2? Bloodye awfulle, I'd hazarde. The idea that a posse of British showbiz notables should cluster in moist-eyed obeisance round some 'superstar' American grandad needs to be vigorously jumped on for the next 12 months, lest we end up with *Deane Martynne's Happye Olde Humbugge Tyme* and the like. The Crosby show was naturally the sadder experience. The star's haunted face did not bring cheer, and the odd snatch of stagey choreography was very tentatively executed by the Crosby family, with many an anxious glance at the cameras to make sure they were following. They were, unfortunately. Como, judged by his looks, is unrivalled as the best-preserved pensioner in the business, but the suspicion is growing that he is as hollow as the tailor's dummy he so amiably impersonates. The show – all tights, tankards and wassail – was as busy as its centrepiece was somnolent. Merrie Olde Rope.

While the nation tried to pack its kids definitively off to bed on Christmas Eve, *The Duchess of Duke Street* (BBC-1) limped to a conclusion, with many a statement of unprinciple from the depths of Gemma Jones's chest, and a comic-drunken turn for John Welsh as the lugubrious and snot-ridden Merriman. *A Christmas Carol* (BBC-2) probably had a huge audience (my theory is that Dickens's story is gradually replacing the one set in Bethlehem), but it failed to capitalise on a well-chilled, knucklesome performance by Clive Merrison as Cratchit. Michael Hordern was never nasty enough, a Scrooge too defensive from the start, and Tiny Tim looked the best-nourished of all the cast, almost as shiny as Elvis Presley.

The penalty for switching off *Dick Emery's Christmas Show* (BBC-1), undoubtedly a necessary manoeuvre, was the probability of seeing *Stars Over Bethlehem* (BBC-2) instead. All manner of Eurovision links and satellites must have been in play to bring us this bout of Christmas singing; but the further we went, the worse the singing got, until you arrived at Bethlehem itself, where it was so bad you could almost face Dick Emery again.

By entering a trance-like or Comoesque state on Christmas Day, I managed to stave off TV to an almost unbelievable extent, thereby missing, no doubt, somebody's visit to the 'Great Ormond Street Hospital for the Incurably Heart-Warming' (as a cynical but accurate radio programme was heard to call it) and some jolly interesting stuff on BBC-2 about Waders and Predators. H.M. The Queen, more of a wader I would say, did pretty well on all channels, though. She was discovered watching a videotape of Her Greatest Hit of 1977 ('We want the Queen!') and the consequent smile of satisfaction lifted the Party Political atmosphere a bit.

Bruce Forsyth and Mike Yarwood were sacrificed, in our house, to a rerun of *Thanks for the Memory* (BBC-2), a round-up of grainy old memories from the BBC vault, interspersed with unusually comical interview footage about the 'impact of TV'. Our household returned to the national mainstream, however, for *Morecambe and Wise* (BBC-1), where, like most people, we were vaguely disappointed. Francis Matthews is possibly too much in the spirit of Ernie's plays: Penelope Keith certainly not enough. Beset by indignity, she oozed untimely dedication to her art. The Angela Rippon dancing spot, conceived as a running gag, simply ran on the spot. What did develop, towards a very odd downbeat close, was the ongoing Elton John situation. He finally made it to the studio after the end of the show, and sang his lonely song to Eric and Ernie disguised as chars. I suppose this was some sort of courageous notion, but it somehow clinched the disappointed mood – for Elton, if melodious at times, sings notoriously feeble lyrics.

I really fell about on only one occasion the whole holiday, and at the oldest routine still in performance: Sandy Powell's failed ventriloquist, on *Parkinson and the Comedians* (BBC-1). The stars of *The Little and Largest Show on Earth* (BBC-1) were distressing. This is the most lop-sided act in variety, and for Large to harp noisily on the non-existent virtuosity of Little is to pile embarrassment on failure.

The part ITV has played in this bog-eyed résumé has been small. I suggest that the reasons for this are laid out for all to see in the *TV Times*. But Granada came close to saving the network's face a few nights ago with a brave try at Eduardo de Filippo's *Saturday, Sunday, Monday* (squashed under the headings 'Laurence Olivier Presents: The Best Play of the Year, 1973'). Now de Filippo is not a man for structure or problematic; the virtues of most of his pieces reside in their many ways of being 'characteristic' of the milieu they are set in. It follows that accuracy in accent, gesture and even bodily posture as a whole is vital to the success of De Filippo performances. Lord Olivier, as the dotty grandfather, did not get away with it. It was not his part; even Sir Ralph Richardson could scarcely have done it without the aid of a waxed moustache and a limp. Pretty well all the young men were equally wide of the mark, and overdid the two-handed beseeching – knuckles forward, thumbs resting against bunched fingers – which Italians ration carefully.

Joan Plowright and Frank Finlay, the principals, should be highly commended. It *was* Miss Plowright's part, and her natural way with it blotted out small misgivings. Much the same can be said of Finlay, who has the advantage (as an adoptive Florentine who was watching with me remarked) of looking a good deal like the Italian actor Walter Chiari. But best of all was Celia Gregory. Her advantage was that she looked a knockout, but apart from that, she had the voice just right – a touch of raucousness – and took gestural liberties, like chucking her father under the chin, that came off superbly. She must have inside information. But she must be a fine actress too, or she couldn't have leaked the information so tellingly. She was entertainment. At last.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Running Dogs

The Kreutzer Sonata *Theatre Upstairs*
The Hunchback of Notre Dame *Cottesloe*
Trembling Giant *Royal Court*
Peter Pan *Casino*
Oliver *Albery*

There's a small, spruce man in a tightly belted mac who may be seen in the West End these days, primly brandishing a placard which warns the passing trade of the dangers of eggs, poultry and cheese under the heading of 'less protein, less lust'. Barmy, no doubt; but mockers might consider that there's a precedent in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, which condemns 'our too abundant and energising food', and in particular meat, game and fish, as 'a systematic incitement to lust'. Tolstoy was an eccentric, too – and to a degree that Peter Farago's adaptation scarcely seems to recognise. The condemnation of protein-induced passion is one of several passages cut, presumably because it would distract from the main business of the evening, which is to prove that the novella is 'the radical feminist thesis of the 1970s written by Tolstoy in the Russia of the 1890s'. Indeed, the play actually ends, not with the husband-turned-killer's strangulated 'goodbye, excuse me', but with some thoughts snatched rough-hewn from much earlier in his narrative and judiciously reshaped so that they apply to more than their original object, the monstrosity of having sex with a pregnant woman: 'I killed my wife long, long ago, before I even met her. I killed my wife the first time I made love to a woman without loving her . . . we all destroy our women that way.'

Now, it is true that Tolstoy lambasted the hyprocrisy and mean-heartedness of the fleshmarket of his time, accusing it of reducing men and women to each other's exploiters and slaves. But he didn't stop there. He wasn't even content to recommend the abolition of marriage. His real target was 'swinishness', meaning sexual activity of any kind, in or out of wedlock; and he faces the obvious objection head-on, arguing that abstinence, on however sweeping a scale, is a greater good than procreation. If that means the extinction of the race, then so be it. To the divine dustbin with the planet. True, the speaker is still the wife-murderer, Pozdnyshev; but there's no doubt his author finds his argument deeply seductive. This is Tolstoy the maniac Manichee: the same Tolstoy who would remain chaste for months on end, then pounce on the wretched Sonia, energetically rape her, and mooch off to anguish about his own failure to subjugate the demon, lust.

We all know that some of our wilder women's libbers are hostile to sex *per se*; but even they would balk at embracing this particular Tolstoy as a pet prophet. Mr Farago's solution is simply to ignore

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him, which is a pity, since it leaves us with a less brilliantly batty play than we might have expected. It is, I fear, another example of that insidious modern trait, which is to plane off those edges that radical fashion finds rough; but it should promptly be added that it is not a particularly bad example, because a great deal of Tolstoy remains intact and, thanks to David Suchet's acting, eloquently so. His Pozdnyshev sits red-eyed and twitching in someone's rather fanciful idea of a *fin-de-siècle* passenger train, spitting out his incredulous rage and distress as if the consonants were stinging his gums and the vowels slowly poisoning his brainbox. It is a performance that amply justifies Mr Farago's decision to ditch the character's co-travellers and convert his plaint into a distracted monologue over the steaming kettle the railway authorities have inexplicably provided. It's one that also justifies the decision of the Royal Court to import the production from Birmingham rep. For all the chic bowdlerisation, this is an evening of venomous intensity.

'A Christmas show for adults (over 12)', announced the publicity for the *Hunchback* with strange disregard for what should, surely, have been its natural constituency. What (one wondered) was twisting the knickers of the nannies at the National? Were they afraid of funnelling hangings, floggings, rackings and the like into impressionable imaginations, thereby upping the nightmare quotient of pre-pubescent London? Hardly. Few modern tots will shrink from a spectre monk, even a ten-foot-tall one, who wobbles up to the footlights to announce a 15-minute interval; fewer still credit an executioner who talks like a suburban verger, acts like a solicitous dentist, and ends by coyly informing the audience that 'my next appearance will be on Tuesday, topping the bill in a torchlight torture spectacular'. However tenebrous the cruelties threaten to become, the tone is always jocular, bantering, happy-go-lucky, just as we should have expected given the identity of the adaptor: Ken Hill, well-known for making whoopee at Joan Littlewood's Stratford East.

That's what we get here, too: Bill Wallis's teddy-bear Quasimodo winning a contest for the ugliest face in the theatre; Morag Hood's Esmerelda bouncing over the audience's laps as her enemies push and shove after her; James Carter's glassy Frollo teetering over the stage on a tightrope and, at a pinnacle of vindictive frenzy, bashing himself on the head with a tin tray; jaunty lines about 'the Great Seine Robbery' and the skull which suffers from 'terminal dandruff'. The problem, as far as U-certificates go, is presumably the occasional over-age wink and nudge, though one would have thought it easily enough solved. The National's satraps had only to expunge a few naughtinesses, such as the chorus in praise of 'tits and bums', and the most mentally pinched of parents would have had little to dread. As it is, I suppose the evening is most safely recommended to grown-ups suffering from temporary or permanent silliness; and the warning on the programme really ought to read, 'A Christmas show for children (over 21)'.

And what label would be suited to the dour-minded panto presented by the 7:84 Company at the Court proper? 'A Christmas show for adults (under 16)', perhaps. The author is John McGrath, who has concocted subtler and more sophisticated things than this capering reminder that some varieties of reconciliation are undesirable, even at Yuletide and New Year. The giant is, of course, British capitalism, trembling in cranky senility; and Jack is the spirit of communism, who proves himself by slaying the Tsar, bringing Mao to power, and 'driving out the star-spangled giant from the Land of the Elephant', only to find his compatriot workers dreadfully listless when it comes to delivering the death-blow here, at home. The lesson fizzes and crackles at times, but it's still obviously a lesson, and I suspect that only the most irresistibly solemn child will find it easier to accept than, let's say, a *Peter Pan* which transformed Hook into the war-scarred head of the Frankfurt chamber of commerce and the Lost Boys into the Baader-Meinhoff gang.

With Ron Moody gleefully improvising from under a Charles I wig, and Susannah York an unusually butch and burly Pan, things are anyway satisfactory enough at the Casino; but there's a side of me that would like to see the 7:84 treatment given to *Oliver*, capable though the present revival is. Isn't it disagreeable to watch little Twist, having found refuge and friendship among the young activists dedicated to redistributing wealth, being nabbed, cossetted and converted by the well-tooled middle class? Sikes as revolutionary hero, Brownlow as running dog: it's an idea.

Jazz

Charles Fox

Shift Work

The Quintet: 'VSOP' *CBS* (2 LPs) £4.99
Herbie Hancock: 'VSOP' *CBS* (2 LPs) £4.99
Weather Report: 'Heavy Weather' *CBS* £3.79
Turning Point: 'Creatures of The Night' *Gull* £3.25
George Benson: 'In Flight' *Warner* £3.49
Ben Sidran: 'The Doctor Is In' *Arista Sparty* £3.79
The Crusaders *ABC* (12-inch 45 rpm EP) £1.35

Words never seem to stay put but go on acquiring fresh definitions. Cross-over, for example, once cosily shared by fabrics, railways and genetics, has recently been annexed by the American record industry and now gets used to describe a record that moves from one of its specialised charts – soul, country, reggae, jazz – into the ranks of the all-out best-sellers. Britain lacks a precise equivalent, despite the stirring arrival of the Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band in the Top Ten.

George Benson, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Weather Report, all nurtured on jazz, have made this profitable sidestep in recent times. Not that the process represents anything new-fangled. Jazz has always cohabited with whatever popular music was around. New Orleans bands played *Yaaka Hula Hicky Dula* and other World War I hits, Duke Ellington recorded *The Lambeth Walk*. And Louis Armstrong was just the first, as well as the most noticeable, of a cadre of jazzmen who felt thoroughly at home in show business.

But those examples belong to days when popular music meant songs, before rock introduced a bagful of performing techniques and electronic gear. All the albums listed above have borrowed from this new tradition, whether it's reflected in tunes built on bass guitar lines, the tautology of certain solos, or the burgeoning of equipment. (For the final side of his album Hancock assembled the following keyboard instruments and accessories: Rhodes Electric Piano, Yamaha Electric Grand Piano, Arp Odyssey, Arp String Ensemble, Hohner De Clavinet, Micro-Moog, Oberheim Polyphonic Synthesizer, Countryman Phase Shifter and Cry Baby Wah Wah).

A search for the true begetter of most of this activity usually ends up at Miles Davis. Both Wayne Shorter and Joe Zawinul, the leaders of Weather Report, as well as Herbie Hancock, worked in Davis's band during the 1960s. Indeed, that band, with Hancock, Shorter, Ron Carter and Tony Williams all present and with Freddie Hubbard pinch-hitting for Miles, gets resurrected on the first two CBS albums. By far the best is that by The Quintet, recorded only last summer: all-acoustic, deliciously turbulent, it even has Hubbard capturing Davis's parched sound, especially in *Jessica*, slow and poignant, swaying like a hammock between modalities. The other VSOP album, recorded 'live' at the 1976 Newport Jazz Festival, presents three vital stages in Herbie Hancock's career. Unfortunately, that first attempt at re-creating the Davis quintet found everybody trying too hard to sound relaxed. Much more successful was Hancock's re-running of the pointilliste arrangements devised for the sextet he led between 1969 and 1973, rather like a Gil Evans band in miniature. Last of all came Hancock's present-day group: funky, slick, repetitive (the leader himself prefers to see it as mingling simplicity with complexity, rather along the lines of Ravel's *Bolero*).

One thing revealed by that retrospective survey is the shift of power, from the individualism of jazz to the collectivism of rock. But the latter gets cultivated much more imaginatively by Weather Report, ranging between the melancholy and the highly spiced (the two Latin-American percussionists are used to add colour as well as vigour). Wayne Shorter is not just a resourceful saxophonist but a writer of stimulating themes (they often nudged Miles Davis into some of his pawkiest solos). Zawinul's compositions work equally well, especially *A Remark You Made*, wispy but with that off-handedness which is one of the charms of jazz.

That kind of obliqueness can also be spotted in the work of Turning Point – British this time – led jointly by Jeff Clyne, a string bassist turned bass guitarist, and Pepi Lemer, whose voice – never uttering

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words – is woven inside the ensemble, often in tandem with Dave Tidball's saxophone. Jazz-rock seems too crude a term to apply to this elegant, elaborate fusion, polite, but not to the extent that George Benson is on *In Flight*, cushioned by strings, singing as much as playing. What happened to Wes Montgomery in the 1960s appears to be happening to another brilliant guitarist a decade later. Benson's style gets reduced to a set of his favourite licks, characteristic rather than creative.

Because Ben Sidran has worked in rock bands (his boyhood chums back in Wisconsin were Steve Miller and Boz Scaggs), he might appear to be making the trip in reverse. Actually, Sidran sounds uncannily like Mose Allison, the inspirer of Georgie Fame, singing just as pertly or wistfully, hovering between the blues and bebop whenever he touches the piano. (An out-and-out bebopper, the trumpeter Blue Mitchell, turns up on several tracks, including *Silver's Serenade*.) Apart from the bass guitar (and some string effects) the instrumentation is acoustic, the ambience hearteningly old-fashioned.

In their different ways all these musicians and groups proffer jazz to audiences that have grown up wary of the very word. Which is what the Crusaders (they called themselves the Jazz Crusaders until they sensed the way the wind was blowing in the 1960s) have been up to for nearly 20 years. As well as having at least one outstanding soloist – the trombonist Wayne Henderson – the Crusaders possess credibility at a very functional level, capable of a boogaloo that will satisfy any black disco crowd. Four of their most popular recent recordings are brought together on a 12-inch EP. Des pite the up-to-date idiom it's all a trifle nostalgic, a reminder of the days when musicians gauged how much they could get away with, of the era before jazz crossed over into art.

Films

John Coleman

Slow Fade

Audrey Rose (AA) *Odeon, Marble Arch*
The Gauntlet (X) *Warner West End; ABC Shaftesbury Avenue; London release*
Wizards (A) *Classic 4, Oxford Street*

'The egregious merit of Chaplin is that he has escaped in his own way from the realism of the cinema and invented a *rhythm*.' Most of the world must know by now that Sir Charles, Charlie, Charlot escaped another sort of realism in his own way on Xmas Day. How many, though, could give the author of the quotation? It was, in fact, T. S. Eliot and it is there to demonstrate that intellectuals took to him early – as he was later to take to intellectuals. Hearing of his death (and it was the timing, one suspects, rather than the fact of it that brought a pang) one experienced conflicting feelings, paramount among which was the desire not to add to the already vast agglomeration of essays, anecdotes and critical asides devoted to the man and his work. After all, it was 30 years since *Monsieur Verdoux*, the last film of Chaplin's to have aroused my genuine interest and respect and the one in which that flitty smile, those over-meticulous gestures, the surface sentiment and the inward chill came together in a creation altogether original: you might hate its misogyny but you could not ignore the bravura of the closing sequence. And so – the trap is sprung – I could find myself fairly ensnared in a prolonged effort to prise myself out of my days in the dark with Charlie. There *will* always be something more to write about him because his celluloid career is so much a part of the history of the movies: and of my own movie-going.

As the market in Buster Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, W. C. Fields has boomed, there has been a generally recognised critical slump in Chaplin stock. I am as likely a fool of fashionable speculation as anyone else and my holdings currently belong to Keaton and Fields. But it would be fickleness of a higher folly not to acknowledge the enormous pleasures still to be found in such silent shorts as *Easy Street* (1917), *Shoulder Arms* (1918), *The Kid* (1920) and *The Pilgrim* (1923). This is a list that could comfortably be extended. The balletic and mimetic skills and the shrewd, music-hall low-life observation are exemplary and unexampled. That twirling little-fellow's toe unerringly finds its way to a bully's bum before skidding away again. It is art at once fastidious and brutal; and Mr Eliot may be left with the final word, for the time being. As he said, Chaplin did have rhythm.

Robert Wise, a professional director of no use to amateurs of the auteur-theory, began as a journalist, joined the sound department of RKO, and then moved on to editing. His first directorial assignment was in 1944, when he took over Val Lewton's *The Curse of the Cat People*. He made a couple more for Lewton, who specialised in horror. Much later, he made *The Sound of Music* and *The Sand Pebbles*. Just before these two, there was a strange, occult piece called *The Haunting*, in which I most warmly remember an oaken door that *throbbed*. Wow! These circuitous credentials will put you, I trust, in the picture currently before us: *Audrey Rose*. Here we are into a very classy piece about reincarnation. It is not my principal objection to what ensues, but I should perhaps register that once round seems to me to be enough. According to Frank de Felitta's screenplay, elegantly tweezered from his own novel, there are Indian statistics to confound me. His hero, Elliot Hoover (Anthony Hopkins, indulging in a deal of hand-flutterings), is persuaded that his dead little daughter's soul has shifted pre-natally into the foetus, now grown to become 12-year-old Ivy (Susan Swift), once carried by a Mrs Templeton (Marsha Mason, who is very good at weeping). Old Elliot haunts the Templeton household, a grand Park West apartment in New York, and has this to say for his wild theory at one point: '700,000 other people also believe in it.' I *thought* that India was religiously more divided than that, but never mind (I mean, the business about coming back as a grasshopper or snake never crops up).

If this seems an oblique approach to the plot, it is – deliberately. Head-on, the affair is downright silly, a kind of chichi twist on the child-possessed-by-devil nuttery to which we have grown accustomed. Elliot's daughter, Audrey Rose, was killed in a car-crash along with mummy and apparently spent a few minutes scrabbling at the car's windows as it went up in flames. The Templetons' Ivy is given, as her birthday approaches, to nightmares, hysteria and similarly scrabbling (one of the more refined touches in this farrago has Mrs T. and daughter playing that game, incidentally, when LAUGHTER becomes SLAUGHTER). 'I saw her burn her hands on a *cold window*,' wails Mrs T: we see this, too, thanks to the active camera of Victor J. Kemper, which nips about, going overhead, withdrawing, staring in, lending aspiring menace (gargoyles in the rain) as if it really means business. Come to think of it, business is exactly what it means. Eventually, anyway, Elliot Hoover – and Mr Hopkins is to be credited with making something out of this vacuum – convinces Mrs T. that Ivy is also Audrey; there is a preposterous courtroom scene, with an imported guru; there is an even more excessive sequence where poor Ivy is hypnotised, by stages, back to the womb. Ivy's dad, Mr Templeton, is played by a moustached John Beck: it is a pity he is such an unsympathetic actor because all my shrivelled heart went out to him. But, then, he's supposed to be an unspiritual bastard. And a Hare Krishna to all of you who discover soul-food in *Audrey Rose*. Wise up.

Clint Eastwood directs Clint Eastwood again, this time round in what might be described as a refreshing change from the mystical claptrap just dismissed. *The Gauntlet* is a change, but it does not refresh, being a long, long chase-movie, with more bullets to the foot than *Bonnie and Clyde* or the most permissive of Peckinpah and a few very heavy messages: about honest cops, honest whores, honestly getting away from it all. Clint is a tough, drinking, unshaven cop assigned to convey a witness from a Las Vegas jail to testify at Phoenix City Hall (or it may be the other way round, geographically). Witness turns out to be a hooker, a sharp-featured performance from Sondra Locke, and the whole thing's a set-up, with both cops and the mob against Clint. How they make it to the steps of justice and buddy up en route is *all* it is all about. Cars, Hell's Angels' bikes, a helicopter, a commandeered bus are among the forms of transport on display, unless you

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discount those of the audience at the Kilburn State where I caught this mindlessness during the hols.

Briefly: Ralph Bakshi's *Wizards* is an animated extravaganza about magic, warring sons, grown old, in a post-holocaust world. The backdrops are frequently more impressive than the moving elves, mutants and whatnot made to move before them. It was a grave error to have so much turn on a disinterred projector showing clips from Nazi newsreels: Hitler & Co. ought to have been redundant. But where this is good (and surely a fragment or so from *Alexander Nevsky* has undergone lab treatment, among many techniques on display?), it is splendid.

Opera

Eric Sams

There Was Light

The Creation *Royal Albert Hall*
Maria Stuarda *Covent Garden*
Dalibor *Coliseum*
Orpheus in the Underworld *Coliseum; further performances 5, 7, 12, 18, 21, 26 January, 2 February*

Twelfth Night seems a suitable time for some reflections on opera considered as a secular religion, combining such heady delights as drink and sport with the hushed reverence of worship. The crowds emerge bright-eyed and festive, trolling confused snatches of song; as if the opera house were a public house, with glasses just as stimulating. The roars for a Sutherland would easily drown those for any Argyle; there are louder cheers for a top note than for an equally well-struck home goal. Even more impressive are the ecstatic silences. A fortnight ago, as the soaring sopranos symbolised the hovering of eagles or angels, it was so quiet you could have heard a pinion droop. Most telling of all are the final moments of self-abasement, the standing ovations that tremble on the verge of kneeling; as if a real miracle had been performed, not just indifferent repertory in jaded revival.

The reason is that people crave for meaning and value in their lives, even at the price of abandoning all rational criteria. Fanatical opera-lovers, like regular churchgoers, are rarely disposed to complain about the services they get; their aim is simply that of celebration, by means of appropriate ritual. Let sterile intellectuals claim that God is missing, presumed dead, and that Nietzsche has been held for questioning. No matter, so long as we have opera to prove that men and women are all really lords and ladies, kings and queens, gods and goddesses, with truly significant parts to play on the cosmic stage. Many operas and all oratorios aim even higher, at being not merely larger than life, but stronger than death. Perhaps that traditional first-night excitement and dressing-up symbolises the pious hope that we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. On any assessment, the lit stage offers the darkened auditorium a glimpse of ideal beauty and order.

Like any heaven, this can easily seem remote and unbelievable; it can also prove a mere mirage. Yet the public's faith can be justified by works in which the word has been made music. As an example, let's begin with *The Creation*, and Haydn's 'there was light' motif. The most natural and elemental of all keys, C major, is suddenly turned on with a great spreading blaze of sound. In performance by the St Bartholomew's Hospital Choral Society and the English Chamber Orchestra, under the skilled and sensitive direction of Robert Anderson, the effect was somewhat dimmed by a choral power-cut; but the main point was electrifying enough. Then Jill Gomez struck a long lustrous high C that clearly typified the lofty sky (or 'th' ethereal vaults', as the stilted text has it – a revised version is surely long overdue). Such verbo-musical connections enabled later song-writers and opera-composers to illuminate the mind by direct currents of dramatic feeling and action.

One reason for the modern success of Donizetti's long-neglected *Maria Stuarda* is its effective use of tonal and rhythmic contrast to embody the bitter conflict between Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth of England. Mary's character was perfectly drawn in Joan Sutherland's exquisite vocal portrayal, all effortless cantilena for natural emotions and shining top notes for high ideals. The part of Elizabeth sounded harder in every sense; her crowned head is all the more uneasy for being in two minds. Even her tessitura is torn between low harsh tyrannical tones and the womanly tenderness of its higher octave. Huguette Tourangeau had to force her fine voice somewhat in order to act out these royal tensions and their breaking-points, which were also graphically conveyed by sharp movements and gestures like the lash of a snapped string. I thought her performance worthy to stand beside Joan Sutherland's, whether on stage or at curtain-call. The Earl of Leicester was Stuart Burrows. His voice often shone, but his demeanour and delivery seemed to lack the cutting edge needed for effective impact. Richard Bonynge conducted with loving and expert care; the sets and staging were none the less convincing for being economical and unpretentious.

But it was essentially the two queens who won over a full house. At the Coliseum, even the King was played as if his opponent Dalibor (John Mitchinson) held all the trumps. On face value, Smetana's score may stand higher than Donizetti's; but the latter has all the tricks. Smetana's music is more programme than opera; it holds up the action even more than Wenzig's inept libretto, which itself is hardly more than a confused recollection of *Trovatore* and *Fidelio*. Tom Hammond's translation was no doubt as competent as usual; but for all that could be heard through the orchestral sound unleashed by Charles Mackerras most of it might just as well have been kept in Czech. The few audible words were nullified by the production; thus petitioners at court were made to turn their backs on their sovereign while singing such phrases as 'I stand before you' and 'behold my tears'.

I thought *Orpheus in the Underworld* was equally unrealistic, in its very different way. Offenbach's gods and demi-gods, like his demi-vierges, have to be treated with proper respect; they are, after all, human beings. This adaptation takes an amusingly Latin text and butchers it to make a Coliseum holiday. One fatal blow was the translation. In the spoken dialogue, the joviality of the gods passed all mortal endurance. The sung verse was either inaudible or else weighed down with slack rhythms and complacent non-rhymes like 'motion/emotion/commotion'. The very French tempi of Clive Timms were arguably too nimble for any English verses, let alone those with feet of lead. The production strove to outdo and embellish the original satire, and succeeded only in travestying a travesty, for example in the graceless clowning of the infant Orpheans. Some agreeable souvenirs of Offenbach were provided by the musicianship of Sally Burgess as Diana; but mainly the talented cast, in particular Terry Jenkins (Orpheus) and Joy Roberts (Cupid), are wasted in such a pantomime. The most living character, I thought, was the dead John Styx, because his haunting refrains were not sent up but sensitively sung, by Stuart Kale. It would be fair to add that many of the ladies made a good case for the use of binoculars; and there is always keen pleasure to be had from the excellent design and lighting effects at the Coliseum.

Weekend Competition

No 2496 **Set by Johnny Option**

More filth, please, while the Editor twitches and snores through his seasonal coma. Have you heard about the Tupper family, that vast and perhaps rather puerile brood? They all have nicknames. There's the high-rise window cleaner who chews gum all day to aid concentration, known as 'Wrigley' Tupper. There are the two alcoholic cousins, based on either side of the Atlantic, known as 'Whisky' Tupper and 'Rye' Tupper respectively. There's the social climber, known as 'Pushy' Tupper, the policeman, known as 'Forcey' Tupper, there's the aristocratic line which includes Willie Getty-Tupper (he always prefers, of course, to be called 'Will'), the happy-go-lucky gent of the road, known as 'Easy' Tupper . . . And so on. Max five entries by 20 January.

Result of No 2493 **Set by Snubbin**

To counter the book-signing fad, we asked for blurbs describing authors whom no one could possibly want to meet.

Report **by Fat Jeff**

Things are dozy enough in the complex at this time of year – so God alone knows what it must be like for you lot, holidaying, as you all are now, in your Caribbean beach-houses, Austrian skiing chalets, etc. Throughout the year, the entries of our wealthy and talented competitors tend to be garishly stamped: at public-holiday time, though, the comp mailbag looks like a sack of cockatoo feathers. Jolly good luck to you, I say, even if the result is an erratic comp (and no Partridge): £6 each, and festive greetings, to the winners! (I'm buttering

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you up like this because it is on the rippling shoulders of our competitors – our good, noble, wise and true competitors – that responsibility for the new 'This English' column will ineluctably fall, to begin with at any rate. See page 22 – and get weaving, you shiftless wrecks.)

Norman T. B. Dunster – 'old TB' – is surely unique among writers today. From his craggy, tortured features, so savagely maimed by the acne that was the motivation of his first novel *Hide My Face* (1937), right down to his surgical boots, he is a man who stands out from others at a glance. The characteristic stubbornness – so often mistaken for aggression – with which he refuses to this day to acknowledge increasing deafness was already much in evidence in *Holding Firm*, his second and some say his most noteworthy work, finally published in 1971. Dunster's other writings include *Who Am I?* (1975), a tetralogy about his desperate search for himself, and a series of essays on Mormonism, Scientology and the Moon movement. DAVID SIMPSON

Gaspard Leprechaun was the pseudonym chosen by Jeff Stringer to celebrate his consumption of 75 cigarettes a day and his contraction of a highly infectious form of leprosy in the Angolan brothel that formed the setting of his first novel, *Itch*. Ever anxious to convey an authentic setting by experiencing it in its entirety, he then spent three years in a Peruvian TB sanatorium researching for *Cough*, the second volume of his tragicomic trilogy. *Snore* is the third and perhaps the most devastating: after indulging in every form of animal husbandry known to the Ikbolo tribe, Leprechaun finally succeeded in contracting tryponosomiasis and, during the brief lucid intervals granted by the sleeping sickness, he set down a harrowing narrative full of compassion and serenity – a truly germinal work.

V. F. CORLEONE

Ken Shark was born in Glasgow in 1935 and published his first novel *Rancid Pastures* in 1956, based on the author's own experience as a teenage Glaswegian pimp in the Fifties. The book immediately established him as a master of vigorous contemporary realism. Its sequel, *Nasty Fun* (1962), recounts with brilliant narrative verve the story of a notorious pre-war child molester whose career is portrayed with a profound sympathy and insight. Shark is now Visiting Professor of Humanities at the University of Harlesden, and is currently working on a critical study of punk rock lyrics.

NICHOLAS MURRAY

A Bishop's by-blow and now an Archdeacon's helpmeet, Hermione Crypt has enjoyed unlimited opportunity for perfecting the wickedly observant characterisation ('She impales her creatures quite pitilessly upon the page' – *Church Times*) that informs her series of superbly grisly clerical whodunits (*Blessed Sod*, *The Soak of Peterborough*, *A Clyster in the Cloister*, *Sick Dean*, *Chapter and Worse*, *Loaded Canon* and now this, her latest, *Psalter and Battery*). But her experience has not been confined to the poisoned chalices of the Cathedral Close. Far from it. Apart from sitting on the Royal Commission on Inner City Decay, she has plied a trenchant pen on such consuming topics as *Bestiality: A Christian View*; while her *Incest in South Worcestershire: Seven Years Field-Work Surveyed* (Pershore Polytechnic Press) is already by way of being a socio-sexual classic . . .

PAUL PITCHCROFT

Tony Miles

Chess

No 65 **Noise from Hastings**

The annual Hastings congress is again under way. This year, of the grandmaster participants two are Russian (Petrosian and Sveshnikov), one Czech (Hort), one Hungarian (Sax), one Israeli (Dzindzihashvili – ex-USSR) and two Americans (Shamkovitch – ex-Israel – ex-USSR and Tarjan). You will notice a complete absence of West European GMs. This might seem strange for an event staged in England, but, on examining past Hastings premiers, I find it is quite common. Apart from myself (76/7) there have been only two Western GMs in the last 5 years – Sigurjonsson (Iceland) in 75/6 and Andersson (Sweden) in 74/5. Before that one must go back to 72/3 when Larsen won. So what is the explanation for this?

In my opinion it is Hastings's ever-growing reputation as one of the worst tournaments in the world. Where else could one find a chess tournament (of any kind) played directly underneath a pantomime to the accompaniment of organ music and the thundering of hundreds of tiny feet? Add to this the noisy demonstration boards, the traditionally foul weather, the necessity for keeping a supply of pennies and a few other oddments and you will see why Hastings is not the most attractive place for any player who is free to choose. Even the leading English players no longer take part. Admittedly Keene and Stean are otherwise engaged at present, but last year they both preferred smaller events on the Continent.

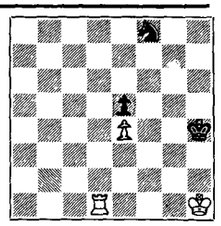
In consequence Hastings is preserved only by players from the Eastern bloc (particularly Russia) who have little or no say in where they do or do not play, and from North America, who by virtue of their geographical location receive just a few invitations to be divided between many players and thus must take what they can get. In passing I must explain that I have confined my survey to GMs, since aspiring IMs and others must also accept whatever invitations come their way to have a chance of the higher title. Thus several leading Western players have appeared at Hastings as IMs, but not as GMs, and of the few who have only one, to my knowledge, has returned. Larsen, for one, vowed 'Never again!'

In my opinion it is high time the Hastings organisers either abandoned the pretence of a high-class tournament, replacing it with a weaker event where British players would have more chance of achieving title norms, or found a better venue and drastically overhauled the organisation. (I once suggested the latter, but was informed that Hastings had no reasonable venue. Move from Hastings perhaps? Would the MCC move from Lords?)

Oh, my tip to win this year's tournament? Petrosian, *not because he's ex-World champion*, but because he's deaf.

Problem 65:

White to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 18 January 1978.

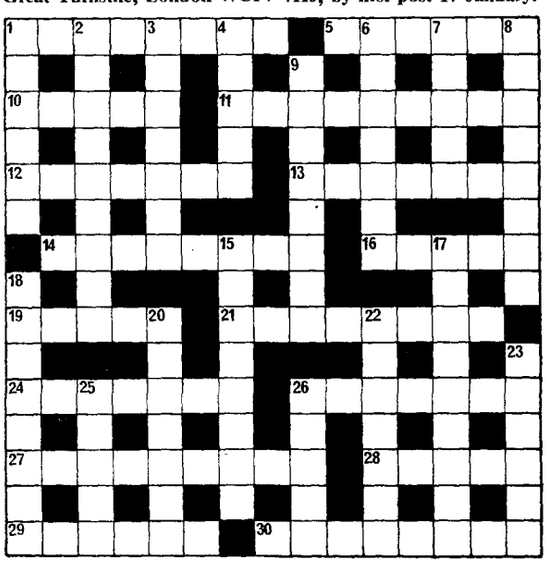


Solution to Problem 63

1. B x Pl P x B (not K x B; 2. Q-N6 mate or Q x B; 2. Q-N8 mate and R-R8ch; 2. K-R2 makes no difference) 2. Q-Q7ch with a draw by perpetual check.

Weekend Crossword 1248

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1248, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 17 January.



ACROSS

1. They provide cover for one article among reproductions (8).
5. A.H.H. (6).
10. Finished game and joined up (5).
11. Irishmen who discover scope in a portent (9).
12. Place in Greece which is not rich in ruins (7).
13. Oddly sterile weapon (7).
14. In a bold and careless way comrades go back to the line (8).
16. Where to leave with an advantage (5).
19. Branch of languages in which Mary Ann shone (5).
21. Rashness of an authoress without virtue (8).
24. Insects which put a stone in place (7).
26. Liberal reform provides aid for the handicapped (7).
27. Signals we broadcast, giving whereabouts of port (9).
28. Debating point for the young (5).
29. Hold-ups although the French put back in time (6).
30. Put in a different class, nearly all turned red with rage (8).

DOWN

1. Funny chaps who put tailless animals in an island (6).
2. Beat up over a tory meeting — of course! (9).
3. Smug fellow makes shell break (7).
4. Time to be caught in rising confidence (5)
6. Hanging down headless in sport (7).
7. A replacement for it would turn boundary into capital (5).
8. Providing fertility for a chap with universal symbol of marriage (8).
9. Politician gives a welcome to overacting (8).
15. Bored, but well? (8).
17. Made lifelike in changing as it lived (9).
18. Enjoyed filth because West gave permission? (8).
20. Bouquet for the songwriter behind the organ (7).
22. More willing to meet one's fate in the back (7).
23. Kill and so get to the top? (6).
25. Is it possible for a lake to become a different waterway? (5).
26. Where the worthless are about a pound (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1244

S	E	R	V	A	N	T	D	W	E	L	L	E	R
C	E	R	A	E	L	O	E					
O	T	H	E	R	M	A	S	S	A	C	R	E	D
F	E	A	I	P	T	C	H					
F	L	A	N	N	E	L	A	N	I	M	A	T	E
E	R	G		I	O		A					
D	I	S	T	E	M	P	E	R	N	A	M	E	D
	A		L	E		I							
R	O	L	L	S	A	N	D	R	O	C	L	E	S
E		P	N		P	L	P						
C	O	M	F	O	R	T	A	R	I	O	S	T	O
O	A	O	A	T	N	T	U						
V	A	L	E	N	T	I	N	O	I	R	O	N	S
E	E	E	N	L	O	N	E						
R	E	S	O	R	T	S	L	I	N	N	E	T	S

Here is the solution which should have appeared on 16 December with the winners' names published that week. Apologies for the mistake.

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APPOINTMENTS

WAR ON WANT

attempts to inform people about the causes of poverty and it aims to give support to people organising themselves to fight these causes. Therefore it does not use the traditional 'Starving Babies' approach in its publications and fund-raising.
We need two people to join a team already carrying out WOW's programmes in the UK and overseas.

Fund-raiser

The person appointed will have some successful years' experience but will already have learnt that fund-raising can too easily determine a charity's policies. Therefore, the person will already appreciate the need to develop a fund-raising approach that is consistent with the basic philosophy of the whole organisation, both in its educational and programme activities.
The fund-raiser will be responsible for planning, initiating, stimulating and evaluating national and local fund-raising efforts, and be responsible for the fund-raising content of national campaigns.
The person will be interested not so much in the financial remuneration as in the chance to share in the development of a charity which risks unpopularity in the pursuit of its aim.

Publications Officer

The person appointed will have had journalistic or other writing experience, be creative, imaginative and already have a good general understanding of the causes of poverty, and be committed to fighting these causes. They will be required to assist in the production of pamphlets, leaflets and fact sheets, and the whole process of compiling, writing and editing the sometimes inarticulate work of the other members of the team as well as their own work. The ability to liaise with other organisations and the press will be essential.

Full job descriptions are available on request (please send S.A.E.)

Applications for either job should include a full C.V., the reasons for wanting to tackle the job, salary required and names of three referees who can be approached immediately, and should be addressed marked confidential to:

Mary Dines, General Secretary, War on Want, 467 Caledonian Road, London N7 9BE.

All applications will be treated in the strictest confidence. Closing date for applications is 25 January 1978.

SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS

Appointment of

Deputy General Secretary

Applications are invited from persons of suitable qualifications and Trade Union background for the post of Deputy General Secretary.
The successful candidate will be required to carry out such duties as may be allocated by the General Secretary and to act for him in his absence from the office.

The present salary is £5,207.50p p.a.

Additional information about the post and conditions of employment, together with an application form, can be obtained from:

Mr James Milne, General Secretary, Scottish Trades Union Congress, 16 Woodlands Terrace, Glasgow G5 6DF. Tel: 041-332 4946.

Student Counsellor

£5,044 - £5,797 p.a. inc.

To develop an effective student counselling service at the Polytechnic's Enfield and Trent Park (Cockfosters) sites. You would be expected to deal with a wide range of problems affecting the academic progress or personal development of students.

Directly responsible to the Head of welfare services, you would also be working with staff from other student services areas in the Polytechnic and with appropriate members of the non-teaching and academic staff, such as personal tutors.

You should be of graduate status, or equivalent, and should have received professional training in counselling from a recognised institution. A wide experience in counselling over a period of at least five years, including the counselling of students or other young people, is required.

Please write for full details and an application form, posting first class, to: **Appointments Officer (ref. 36.4B), Middlesex Polytechnic, Bounds Green Road, N11 2NQ, to whom completed forms must be returned by 14 January.**

Middlesex Polytechnic

TRADES UNION CONGRESS

The TUC is seeking to fill the following vacancies for assistants to help draft policy memoranda and service TUC committees. Trade union experience would be an advantage for these positions.

The work of the **Economic Department** (two vacancies) involves economic, industrial and collective bargaining issues.

The **International Department** has one vacancy for a person who can speak one European language other than English and who has a qualification in social science.

The **Organisation and Industrial Relations Department** (one vacancy) includes manpower policies, trade union organisation, and industrial relations.

In addition a vacancy exists in the course development unit at the **TUC Training College.** The post would involve assisting in the production and piloting of study materials for trade union courses.

The salary scale starts at £4,149 per year rising to £5,479 including London Weighting.

Write by January 13 to the **General Secretary, Trades Union Congress, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS,** for further details and an application form (quoting ref no TUC 1).

Please specify the department(s) in which you are interested. Alternatively, telephone 01-636 4030 and ask the secretary to the Department which interests you, to send you this information.

National Union of Bank Employees

Trade Union Organiser

The National Union of Bank Employees require an Organiser to work in the London area. Previous experience in this employment an advantage.

Commencing salary £3,700 p.a. and Inner London allowance of £400 p.a., subject to adjustment. Car provided, good holidays and conditions of service.

Applications, giving full details of age, qualifications and previous positions held, should be addressed to the **National Organiser, NUBE, 102 Bute Street ,Cardiff CF1 6AD,** not later than 30 January 1978.

VACANCIES

We require

MALE and FEMALE AGENTS

FULL and PART-TIME

If you are interested and would like to make up to £100 p.w. send for free details, enclosing s.a.e., to:

CALIBRE JEWELLERY SUPPLIES,
Calibre House, 162a Sefton Street,
SOUTHPORT, MERSEYSIDE.

Age Concern Westminster

offers social work experience for someone who already has shorthand and typing, as Assistant to Centres Organiser concerned with running 9 clubs and day centres for elderly people in Westminster.

Salary range £2,907-£3,324.

Application form: **313 Harrow Road W9. Tel. 828 8070 ext. 3010.**

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

LECTURESHIP IN POLITICS

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons, male or female, for the lectureship in the Department of European Studies and Modern Languages, with special reference to the political system of France. Interests in comparative politics or political behaviour in Western Europe would be an advantage.

Salary on the Lecturers scale £3,333 — £6,655 per annum.

Requests for further details and application form should be addressed to the Registrar, UMIST, PO Box 88, Manchester M60 1QD, quoting reference ES/112/EK.

Closing date: 31 January 1978.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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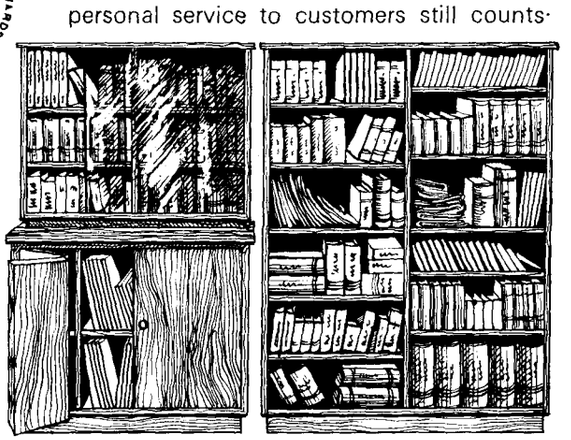

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Meetings

CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. Dianne Hayter, Gen. Sec. Fabian Society on 'Reform of the Labour Party'. Wed. 11 Jan. 7.30 p.m. Argyle Community Centre, 51 Argyle St, (off Gray's Inn Rd. nr Kings Cross stn). All welcome. Collection.

'COMPUTER FILE PRIVACY', talk by John Florentine. London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, W8. Sun. 8 Jan. 7.30 p.m. Admission 30p.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY. 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Tues. 10 Jan. 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. Wed. 11 Jan. 6.30 p.m. Public Lecture 'Meditation and You' — Paul Ingram. All welcome. Send s.a.e. for full programme.

THEOSOPHY. Informal Forum on Basic Theosophy. Sun. 8 Jan. 8 p.m. All welcome. S.a.e. free pamphlet, talks programme, booklist. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2.

Courses

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Courses — see also p. 31

Concert

EDWARD ELGAR: Violin Concerto (Campoli). Enigma Vars. Prelude — The Kingdom. Salut d'Amour. New Westminster Philharmonic, conductor Joseph Pilbery. St. John's, Smith Square, SW1. Fri. 6 January 7.30 p.m. £1.50, £1, 60p. Potters Bar (77) 50735 or 01-455 4977.

EUROPE—A SOCIALIST DIMENSION

Your chance to control Europe for a weekend, at Fircroft College, Birmingham.

14 April, 8 p.m. to 16 April, 4 p.m.

A Course to promote debate on a Manifesto for Europe, arranged by Young European Left for Labour Party members. £11.50 per place.

Bookings to Hugh Geach, YEL Secretary, Flat C, 104 Christchurch Rd, London SW2.

Wordsworth Heritage Appeal . . .

Books in Nooks?

Stubbs has been saved for the Nation, but the Wordsworth and Coleridge manuscripts are still not home at Grasmere. We have until 5 February to return them.

The V & A, the British Library and the Historical Buildings Council are already firmly behind us. But with next month's deadline acutely in mind, the Trustees of Dove Cottage propose (with the help of R. & J. Balding of Edinburgh), to put out a special catalogue of books and autograph material donated to the Appeal. So, in addition to money, we now urgently need anything at present gathering dust on your bookshelf.

Packages should be addressed to: **The Wordsworth Heritage Appeal, Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria,** where they will be very gratefully received.

If you're short of string, we could probably arrange collection in many parts of Britain.

20 YEARS IN A THAI JAIL—AND PERHAPS INNOCENT . . .

Nurse Rita Nightingale age 24 of Blackburn has received a twenty year prison sentence in Thailand. This could mean that she is doomed to stay in prison almost until the year 2000 — and she may be innocent. Please help us to provide her with a barrister for an appeal — and also to fly out her mother to visit her.

NURSE NIGHTINGALE APPEAL—PORTIA TRUST

Clydesdale Bank, Workington, Cumbria.

Please join the Portia Trust and help women in trouble. We are a registered charity.
Head Office, 38 Fisher Street, Workington, Cumbria. (0900 3100).

Send for 'The Crime of Baby-Love,' 12p

SPNM AND IMPROVISED MUSIC

The SPNM proposes holding a weekend seminar on improvised music, and welcomes suggestions from groups or individuals involved in this music as to how the proposed weekend can be used to the widest advantage.

The Society issues this invitation because of the broad stylistic and philosophical area covered by improvised music. This is a difficult subject for a few people alone to issue without the help of those who are closely involved.

Please send your suggestions and comments in writing as soon as possible to: Society for the Promotion of New Music, 1 Montague Street, WC1B 5BP (Tel: 01-637 9778).

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